THE ROLE OF WOMEN DURING MUGHAL RULE :1526 TO 1707





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DECLARATION

I the undersigned here by declare that, the thesis entitled "THE ROLE OF WOMEN DURING MUGHAL RULE : 1526 TO 1707"" written and completed by me under the supervision of **Dr. M.T.Kamble**, Professor, Department of History and Archaeology, Karnatak University, Dharwad for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History and Archaeology, has previously not submitted for the award of any degree or diploma or other similar title in India or abroad.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "THE ROLE OF WOMEN DURING MUGHAL RULE : 1526 TO 1707" Submitted by **Ms. Swapna Rani Das**, for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Department of History and Archaeology is an original work carried out by her under my guidance Neither the thesis nor a part of it has been previously submitted for any degree or diploma.

(Dr. M.T. Kamble)
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Hubli *Swapna Rani Das*

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CONTENTS

Chapter - 1

BRIEF INTRODUCTION ABOUT WOMEN AND EARLIER WORKS

Chapter - I

INTRODUCTION

Women, the most vital and important structure of the human society, have always been at the centre of attention and focus of different social and political reformists, philosophers, thinkers, philanthropists, social scientists, planners and do - gooders.

Whether it is the rustic rural, peasant woman, toiling her way in the blazing sun, to the mother crooning a lullaby to her child, to the proud, suave, savvy business women, thus establishing herself to be indispensable, the woman has carved an indelible and permanent niche in our society.

There might be a great chasm of difference in the lifestyles of these women but they are all bound by the common thread of an unconquerable spirit, abundance of love and enough strength to make the world go round.

Whether it is rocking the cradle or ruling the world, women have done it all and that too, with great fortitude and aplomb. So it is only right that we salute all the women, who have fought every battle the hard way and yet emerged like a diamond to become more luminous and shining. It is proper to sing a well- deserved hymn of praise for all the unsung heroines of our world in an effort to cherish the spirit of Indian womanhood.

Indian women, in general, have shown a gradually degraded situation from time to time, sometimes due to favorable and

sometimes due to unfavorable attack and counter attacks of socio political forces.

Earlier Works : From the Persian Primary, secondary, literary sources Accounts of foreign travelers, paintings, monuments etc, it is apparent that the Mughal Dynasty played an important role in India from 1526 to 1707. It is also obvious that it made a valuable contribution to the life and culture of the people of medieval North India.

From the primary, secondary and other foreign sources and also from miniatures and paintings, monuments etc. it is clear that the Mughals, not only the heroes(the Emperors) but also the heroines (Queens) played a very important role to complement their male counterparts.

Several works on the Mughal have come in print. A few notable publications are :

1. Ila Mukherjee in her book 'Social Status of North Indian Women' : She has mainly focused and given importance to the social aspects but not on women and politics or war etc.
2. Rekha Mishra in her published work 'Women in Mughal India'. Though she has dealt with all the aspects of the upper class and the aristocratic women of the Mughal Dynasty, her account is very brief and limited and does not mention all the aspects in detail.
3. Zinat Kausar in her work ' Muslim Women in Medieval India', tresses on the social aspects of the life of the Mughal women,

but here not only the Mughal women, but also the common Muslim of the Medieval times are discussed on the whole.

4. K.S. Lal in his book ' The Mughal Harem' details a very vivid and clear picture of the Mughal harems system, the women who resided in them and their social and cultural activities. Also he has given more importance to famous Mughal women only.

5. Soma Mukherjee in her book ' Royal Mughal Ladies and Their Contributions', we discover that the historical writings of her book mention only the royal Mughal women the information about other women who achieved so much has been left out.

All the above mentioned works deal either with only one aspect or the other. For the present thesis and for the complete history of the role of women during Mughal rule a more complete, systematic and detailed history is to be written or studied. The Role of Women during Mughal rule has not been exposed to an analytical study hitherto . The present thesis is an effort in this direction. The present study has made an attempt, on the contrary, to clear up many points that have never before been entirely understandable and fits nicely into those gaps of understanding which have, in many places, been left in the historian's mind.

The present study is therefore an attempt to present collectively and in great deal, a comprehensive concise, co –herent and detailed account of the contributions and life of the women from the times of Babar up to the times of Aurangzeb.

In this Research, I have tried to provide a glimpse and trace the history of this magnificent role of women from its origin in 1526 – the date of Babur's victory at Panipat till the year 1707.

My next aim is to encourage further scholarly work on the 'Role of Women' from the earliest times. We plainly do not know enough. The secondary literature on the Mughal women is slender inspite of their great importance in South Asian and World History. A large number of scholarly treatises and lengthy dissertations on various castes, classes and ethnic groups are just waiting for historians to explore and discover them. New sources in different languages, need to be identified, authenticated, collated and published in the original text and in translation. We need better integration of the Indian and European sources, and our best hope lies in the originality of young historians from India.

Finally, my most important aim is to offer a one- volume synthesis that will be comprehensible to the layman and novice. It is my sincere hope also that this work can be read with profit by anyone who is interested in this most fascinating of historical period, the astounding wonder that was the Mughal era.

Plan of Work :

Plan of Work : This thesis contains fourteen chapters. The FIRST chapter is the introductory chapter in which briefly The Mughal empire is presented. And in brief definition of women have been reviewed.

The coming of the Mughals is reviewed in the SECOND chapter. It traces the history of this magnificent Empire from its creation in 1526. This chapter deals with the entire role, status, position and contributions of women before the advent of the Mughals.

All the aspects of women in pre - Mughal period is described. To quote a few descriptions is made about Rajashri, the sister of Harshvardhan and Raziya Sultan, the daughter of Ilttutmish of the Slave Dynasty. In the pre -Mughal Period women also had taken an active part in politics, War etc Besides Razia Sultan, other women also played a vital role, before the advent of the Muslims in India.

In the THIRD chapter, discussion is made on the, birth, marriage as well as other related customs, during the Mughal rule.

Attempts have been made to highlight the related customs in birth, marriage etc by both Muslim and Non Muslims. Discussions have been made about birth, early marriage, monogamy, Monogamy, divorce etc

The FOURTH chapter reviews the Mughal harem. The Mughal harem was not a magic power or garden full of lissome and lovely maidens. It was a peculiar establishment where mothers, aunts, sisters, cousins, wives, concubines, princesses and minor princes, dancing girls and maid servants all lived under one roof as in a joint family. Each woman had a distinct role to play and each was treated with deference, according to her status.

The FIFTH chapter deals with the Mughal women and Politics. As in all other fields, in the political field too, the women did not lag

behind their menfolk. Some of these Mughal women were just not contented with the life of opulence and luxury inside the seraglio. Their activities were not only confined to beautifying themselves and luxuriating in their wealth, the Mughal women took a step forward, and we come across politically ambitious Mughal women, who, indirectly or directly influenced the political course of events, of those times.

The SIXTH chapter gives an enlightening account of the titles and ranks that were conferred and bestowed on eminent and outstanding Muhal women who had made an indelible mark in the glorious days of the Mughal era. The royal Mughal women enjoyed an elevated and revered status in the court of the Mughal Emperor They were so highly regarded and appreciated that high title and ranks were given to some of them. The most well- known and famous title was conferred on Mehrunnisa. In 1611 AD, Janagir bestowed upon her the title of "Nur Mahal" (the Light of the Palace) and later on the title was upgraded to "Nur Jahan" (the Light of the World) The title "Nur Jahan " became so famous that her original name was completely relegated to the background.

The SEVENTH chapter surveys the social, and religious activities, interests and contribution of the women from the times of Babar to Aurangzeb. It reveals that even in the intricate and complex field of economy the royal women of that age, if at all, they came forward, participated actively and took a keen interest, invested large amounts in commerce and trade and proved to be good and natural business women and got back many times more as returns in the

from of huge profits. Their construction of market- places and sarais and having their very own ships carrying on external trade, certainly helped to fill the overflowing coffers of Mughal wealth and in the existing process of commerce and trade.

The EIGHTH chapter informs us that the Mughal era witnessed a considerable amount of development in the literary, educational and learning field, where like the Mughal men, the royal women and princesses too contributed in their own way. Composing exquisite poems and verses seems to have been their favourite pastime. They were well educated cultured and highly- accomplished as well as renowned for their beauty. Many of them were great patronesses of learning and built schools, madarsas and colleges for the spread of education and gave large monetary grants and lands to scholars, poets and other learned men who flocked to the Mughal court in great numbers, attracted by the encouragement they received from the beautiful and gracious royal Mughal women.

In the NINTH chapter, we observe that the Mughal period saw a magnificent and substantial development in the field of Art and Architecture and other forms of art, where the Mughal women contributed considerably. Their creativity and aesthetic sense is revealed to a high degree in their feats and achievements in the field of art and architecture. They built monuments, caravanserais and market - places, mosques and gardens. We come across remarkable women like Haji Begam, Jodha Bai, Nur Jahan, Jahanara, Roshanara, Zeb-un-Nisa and Zinat-un- Nisa, whose remarkable

building exist even today, some preserved extremely well and some in total ruins.

The TENTH chapter tells us about the travels that the Mughal royal women undertook very often. The life of the Mughal women was not always confined within the four walls of the seraglio. A lot of their time was also spent in accompanying their menfolk for various purposes. They accompanied their men on hunting or military expeditions; or during their exile; or to go to cooler places to escape the cruel summer heat of the plains; or to look after their vast and widely- scattered lands, properties and family holdings; or for the simple luxury and joy of sightseeing. Wherever the Mughal Emperor went, his women accompanied him. Sometimes they were subjected to a lot of difficulties. Lack of adequate provisions, bad weather, dangerous and mountainous routes, attack from wild animals and robbers, were only some of the problems. No doubt, they suffered alot, yet we do not come across any instance, where a royal Mughal woman refused to accompany her Lord and Master. Such was the loyalty and courage of these brave and outstandingly remarkable women.

The ELEVENTH chapter deals with the courtesans, or prostitutes or public women. Discussions have been made about their interests in various aspects like, music, fine arts, Education their social fine arts. Their social status is also dealt with.

The TWELFTH chapter reviews the economic contributions made by women. The women who were greatly interested took an active part in the economic contribution. They built many buildings.

To quote a few examples, caravan arais were built for travellers and merchants, They set up market etc.

Women made a great income by their economic contribution. The chapter also explain, about woman owning vast wealth, Jagirs etc. It is also revealed that the Mughal rulers helped their women in this economic work.

The THIRTEENTH chapter deals with the position of Middle and Lower Class women. The status of women in the early Indian society passed through many phases as a result of the social changes in the country. The revered position that the women enjoyed before the arrival of the Muslims in India slowly declined during the Turkish reign. While the age old tradition of high esteem for women continued in certain sections of the society, there were some who looked down upon them with contempt believing that they (the women) were the root cause of the ruin of all men. The shameful practice of child-marriages, sati, jauhar and the evil custom of dowry and the purdah system were the prevalent customs that came into existence at this time.

In the FOURTEENTH and the observations about all the written Thirteen chapters.

A brief sketch of the Mughals

The Mughal Empire was founded by Babur in 1526. He ruled the kingdom from 1526 to 1530, He was followed by his son Humayun who ruled from 1530-1556. In between his rule Sher Shah of the Sur dynasty had ruled. After Sher Shah's death,

Humayun regained his lost throne. After Humayuns death, his son Akbar, came to power. Emperor Akbar ruled from 1556 to 1605. After Akbar's death, he was succeeded by his son Jahangir, who ruled from 1605 to 1627. Later, when Jahangir expired, his son Shahjahan, ruled from 1628 to 1658, Shahjahan was succeeded by his son, the fast important Mughal ruler Aurangzeb, who ruled from 1658 to 1707.

By the 1600s, the Mughal Emperor held absolute political sway and authority over a population numbering between 100-150 millions and lands covering most of the Indian subcontinent. The Mughal Emperor's lands and subjects could be compared only to those ruled by his contemporary, the Ming Emperor in early modern China. Timurid India far surpassed in sheer size and resources its two rival early modern Islamic Empires- Safavid Persia and Ottoman Turkey.

The "Great Moghul's" wealth and opulence was legendary and proverbial. His treasure chests housed the looted wealth of dozens of vanquished dynasties; his throne, insignias and emblems displayed some of the most magnificent and spectacular precious stones ever mounted. Travellers and observers were impressed by the grandeur, opulence and sophistication of the Mughal Empire. The ceremonies and rites, etiquette, poetry, music and exquisitely- executed paintings and objects of the Imperial Court blended together to create a distinctive high aristocratic culture. Mughal courtly culture retained its power and appeal long after the Empire itself had declined. Today, the Mughal style as represented in cameo and miniature paintings, or

much -admired buildings like the Taj Mahal, has an immediate, powerful and enduring attraction. The Mughal Empire was founded in the early 1500 and by the end of the following century, the entire subcontinent with a population of roughly between 100 and 150 millions, was ruled by The Mughal ruler.

For more than one hundred and seventy years (from 1526-1707) the Mughal Empire remained a centralized, and dynamic organization. The Emperor commanded a corps of officials and soldiers of proven loyalty who carried out his every command in all the provinces. Money, men, information and resources moved routinely and regularly throughout the Empire as official needs dictated. Mughal success was the result of active, hard - driving rulership exercised by extremely adept and capable administrators who acted as their own chief executives. Centralized controls, territorial expansion and military victory depended up on the managerial skills and strategic adeptness of the Emperors and their advisers.

The Empire was more than an external superficial canopy stretched over the sizable and substantial social life lived in each region. It was an intrusive and centralizing system which unified the subcontinent. Imperial military power imposed an unparalleled and extraordinary level of public discipline and order. The level and scale of organized violence diminished perceptibly in the provinces within its borders. Imperial demands for revenue and income and tribute stimulated production and encouraged market growth. The uniform practices and ubiquitous presence of the Mughals, left an imprint

upon society in every region and area of the subcontinent. Few communities and few people, if any, were left untouched by this massive edifice. The Mughal Empire emerged from the Indian historical experience. It was the end product of a millennium of Muslim conquest, colonization and state - building in the Indian subcontinent.

As heirs to the Indo- Muslim political tradition, the Mughals discovered conditions favorable for political centralization. They could turn to numerous precedents in their efforts to construct a dependable yet flexible administrative and political system. All the earlier Sultans had recruited and controlled nobility bound to themselves and relatively free of constraining local ties. If continuously reinforced, bonds of personal loyalty and fealty imposed obligations of service for each ruler.

Earlier rulers had introduced local Hindu warrior aristocracies to maintain order and help levy taxes in the rural area. Royal officials and noblemen could secure co operation to the limits spelled out in contractual agreements or treaties. These were the two essential pivots in the articulated structure of the Indo- Muslim state. Without a reliable Imperial elite, no ruler could hope to function. Without co-operating local kings and aristocracies the rural side would have been lost.

Another, often ignored technological advance aided Indo-Muslim kings. The introduction and wide use of paper in the eleventh century made the centralized administration of complex and large organizations much easier and simpler. Kings could exercise a firmer

control over people, land, resources and money by using paper documents and records. Enforcement of Standardised rules and regulations became more practicable and possible. Agriculture, trade and industry could readily support the economic needs of a rising Empire.

In each region, peasant cultivators living in villages grew dozens of varieties of food grains and specialized crops for sale and also for subsistence. Wells and river irrigation helped to better the production and partially offset the years when the annual monsoon rains failed. Industrial production was impressive especially from the intricately organized textile industry. Weavers, dyers and painters produced an enormous range of silk and cotton cloth for sale in local, regional and international markets. Markets for commodities and labor were extensive and efficient. Overland, coastal and deep water trade routes linked local economies with the wider world. Indian trading communities in Gujarat, North India and the South could scarcely be equalled for the sophistication of their resources and skills. The Indian population was long- habituated to a money economy using gold, silver, copper and mixed silver and copper coinage. Meager domestic production of gold and silver was supplemented by great imparts paid for by India's trade surplus.[2]

The subcontinent's productivity made sure that it enjoyed a continuing favourable balance of trade. Besides precious metals, India's only other unmet needs included a great number of horses, primarily for military use, black slaves and ivory from Africa and other exotic consumption good. Exports included much sought – after

Indian cotton cloth bound for Southeast Asia, East Africa and the Middle East as well as spices, narcotics and other agricultural commodities. [3]

In the early decades of the sixteenth century, the compressed social energy of Western Europe began to have an impact upon the Indian subcontinent. New markets, products, technologies and ideologies pressed upon the subcontinent. These forces travelled over long- established land and sea- routes to the Middle East and the Mediterranean to reach Northern and Western India. Under the impetus of Iberian expansion, new sea -routes and maritime connections with Western Europe became the channel and the conduit for direct, unmediated transfers to India. Many changes for the spread of the elements of culture originated in Europe's discoveries in the New World. This new conjuncture stimulated growth in the economy of the subcontinent and, indirectly, the growth and expansion of the Mughal Empire.

The direct maritime connection was established by the Portuguese, who, sailing around the coasts of Africa, entered the Indian Ocean trading world for the first time in 1498. Portuguese ships equipped with numerous light cannons were far superior to country made vessels.[4]

In 1509, the Portuguese's first Viceroy, de Almeida destroyed an allied war fleet sent by the Mamluk ruler of Egypt and the Sultan of Gujarat. For the next hundred years or more the dominant naval power in the Indian Ocean were the Portuguese. They administered a

new, unprecedented political entity: a Maritime Empire, from a command post on the Western Coast of India.

In 1510, the estuarine island of Goa on the Mandovi River was overcome and occupied by Albuquerque and held it against a besieging army commanded by the Sultan of Bijapur whose principal port Goa had been.

Goa then became the seat of the Viceroy and a Council was appointed by the Portuguese king in Lisbon. Between Lisbon and Goa a formal, new sea -borne connection was established by which a European state exercised direct control over its subsidiary realm in the East. Every year, from Lisbon to Goa, a flotilla of vessels fully-armed and equipped by the King of Portugal sailed and each year a flotilla returned from the Indies. The Portuguese and their minions and slaves, precious metals of gold, silver and copper, correspondence and commands, officials, supplies and goods including firearms and other commodities travelled all the way from Portugal to India. Spices, returning Portuguese officials, correspondence and official dispatches and other provisions made the return voyage. Between India and Europe, an early aggressive modern State in Europe administered a direct political and economic linkage.

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Chapter - 2

STATUS OF WOMEN PRIOR TO THE COMING OF THE MUGHALS

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Both men and women in the structural aspect of society have occupied great importance from time immemorial. Women have taken important roles in all walks of life. There is no doubt to the fact that the have made great contributions to the progress of humanity. In any society, their status has become a measuring rod to gauge the culture and maturity.

If we want to study the role of women in India, in the period of the Mughals, we must study their conditions in India, before the coming of the Mughals.

In ancient India, the role of the women was quite considerable and it was well recognized also. They made their mark in all walks of life. They helped their husbands in all ways in running the family well. They gave timely advice and gave all round co-operation, in always protecting the interests of the family. They have taken up arms and fought side by side with men in protecting their country. Even in ancient times there were many cases wherein women have ruled their country extremely well and with great bravery. Even in the period of Harshavardhana, his sister Rajashri, after the death of her husband, sat by the side of her brothers and participated in matters of state with great concern and wisdom.[1] In the Rajput kingdoms, they gave training to the talented and intellegent women of the royal family

In the 10th century, Sughandha and Didda(both women) ruled their states very well.[2] Many women have been employed in palaces as personal attendants, door-keepers and even as guards. In the period of Harsha, women palace-guards have been employed in good number. They were known as Pratiharis and they used to announce loudly the arrival of any visitor into the palace. Lady-employers held the royal umbrella and wave the 'chauri' before the dignitaries as a mark of respect. They also worked as 'betal carriers' and' flower bearers.[3] The royal kitchen was managed by women only. Women went with the king on hunting-expeditions. On such occasions they travelled on elephants, horses and chariots.[4] On some festival days, female-attendants were participated in music and dance programmes. Beautiful ladies were employed as spies and they were used as 'Vishakanyas' to poison and kill enemy personnel. [5] In ancient India, the 'Purdah' system existed. But it was not very popular and was used very rarely.[6] It was quite common amongst the rich and aristocratic families. In religious matters, women were equal to men.[7] Women actively participated in almost all rituals, with their husbands.

Many women even joined Buddhist monasteries and even became 'nuns' (Bhikshunis).. Rajashri was very interested in Buddhism. [8]

Even in the field of learning, women were quite advanced and they earned respectable ranks and positions. In this there were two types : In the first type, women studied only upto their marriage. They

were known as 'sadyodwahas' In the second type, women studied throughout their lives. They were known as 'Brahmanadins.'[9] There were many women who were distinguished teachers and debaters.[10] In the period of the Upanishad, eminent women like Sulabha, Gargi and Maitreyi were known for their exceptionally brilliant knowledge in the field of philosophy. This interest of women in the field of leaning continued even upto the Middle Ages.[11] Bana has recorded that Divakar Mishra was appointed to teach Buddhism to Rajashree. It is well known fact that the learned wife of Mandanamishra had defeated Shankarcharya in debate. The wife of the famous poet Rajashekhara (Avanti Sundari) was a very leaned women.

Indralekha, Sheela and Subhadra were some great poetesses of that time (From 600-1200AD)[12] Some girls learnt mathematics also with great interest. Bhaskaracharya wrote 'Leelawati' to teach Mathematics to his daughter.[13] Women were very interested in fine arts. The women of the higher classes especially, took a lot of interest in fine arts such as music, dance etc Rajashree, the sister of king Harsha was quite good in music and dance.[14] The famous poet Kalidasa, tells about the art of the women. In Harsha's Ratnavali, the Rani is shown as painting something.

Women spent their leisure time in various hobbies such as music, dancing etc Interesting small games such as hide-and-seek, run-and-catch etc which could be played in their court yards were very popular amongst the women. [15] Many girls were good swimmers also. In addition to these, they were good in gardening, garland-

making, toy-making and interior decorations. [16] They were indulged in this type of recreations till the period of the Rajputs. In the women's houses. Generally, there were court-yards and playgrounds.[17] Rajput women were went with their husbands on hunting trips and also to battle-fields. They actively participated with their husbands in religious functions also. [18]

By the time of the medieval period, women started wearing saris. They covered their upper part with Angiya(bodice) To cover the upper part of their body, they used a long Dupatta or Odhani, of different colours. This they wore when they went out of the house.[19] Northern and Western India, they wore 'lahanga', which was a long skirt.

Women wore Kanchuk and choli also. They changed their attire according to the seasons.[20] In summer they wore light-coloured dresses. Generally they liked dark colored dresses. [21]

Ornaments were very popular among the women. They wore a lot of flowers and ornaments. The common ornaments that were used by women were Shikhapasa, (the one that is worn on the forehead) earrings, bangles, bracelets, rings, waist-belts, payal etc.[22] During this period the nose-ring was almost unknown.[23] Ornaments were generally made up of gold, silver and precious stones.[24] Even poor women wore ornaments, but their ornaments were generally made up of ivory, glass and brass. [25]

Apart from ornaments, they paid a lot of attention to their make-up. They used various types of Sandal-wood pastes mixed with saffron and other such materials.[26] They dyed their hair and wore

flowers and ornaments to embellish their hair-styles.[27] They were combed in broad plaits. The most popular style was tying the hair in the form of a fine bun. On the bun they wore different of ornaments.[28] They applied collyrium to their eyes and put vermillion on the forehead. They decorated their faces also.[29] They applied different types of colours on their lips, on the fingers and palms etc.[30]

As far as property was concerned, both husband and wife were the joint -owners of the property. It was the custom in those days, that the husband would promise his would-be wife, that he would never aspire for the property of his wife. There was a joint ownership policy by means of which the women were entitled to some property, even though it was not equal to the share of the males. There was no share for women in immovable properties, but she was entitled to her 'streedhan' which included a good amount of ornaments, dresses, utensils etc She was the absolute owner of that'streedhan.'[31]

In case of the women of lower classes, they were helped their husbands in all ways. They worked in the fields like ordinary agricultural labourers.[32] They prepared weapons of war such as bows and arrows. They took active interest in work such as weaving, embroidery and basket-making.[33] And did such works efficiently and skillfulls. Such labour, they contributed a substantial amount to the income of the family. Some of them even took up jobs in the royal palaces.[34]

At the very outset, we can say that before the advert of the Mughals in India, the condition of women was reasonably good. It was

never disappointing. In course of time, women lost much of their status and rights. In earlier periods they enjoyed many rights. Though they have lost much, even now what they have is quite considerable.

When the Turks came to India, they brought with them their own culture. Their culture was the culture of the Arabs and the Abbasids. Among them also, women had respectable positions. They took active interest in politics. In earlier times they associated with men fairly easily. But the segregation started from the 10th century onwards. Many women easily competed with men in intellectual aspects also. But they were not encouraged to dwell in or probe into the field of Philosophy. On account of their natural instincts, they were quite good in the fields of fine arts such as music, dance etc Some of them took a lot of interest in fashion-designing. Though there was lot of upheaval in the 11th century in the West, women were adored and respected. Their chivålry was respected and encouraged. These customs and practices, no doubt, had come from the Turkish omgins but later on they brended with local traditions and culture and this type of mixed culture was practiced by the people.

The Sultans of Delhi maintained large harems and they spent much of their lisure time in the company of their wives and the women of the harem. Apart from the women, mothers, and sisters were also included in the harem. The most respected person was the mother of the Sultan. Next, was the chief wife. In the Rajput and Persian tradition, the mother of a person occupied a more dominant

position than his wife or consort. Some such women were enjoyed very high positions and were many times given suitable titles such as Malka-i- Jahan, Makh-dumah-i- Jahan etc.[35]

Some capable royal women took enormous interest in politics also. In the Sultanate Period, the first instance of a woman (royal lady) taking interest in the affairs of the state and interfering in administrative matters was the wife of Iltutmish and mother of Rukhuddin Firoz. She was quite ambitious. Iltumush had expressed his desire to make Razia his successor. But Shah Turkan interfered in the matter. After the death of her husband, she put her lazy and pleasure-loving son on the throne because in his name she could rule the county.[36] Mivaj-us- Siraj says, " Shah Turkhan began to assume the decision and disposal of state affairs and used to issue commands. To fulfil her ambitions he even got killed some of her own people in the harem. She also conspired against Razia. When her selfish and evil designs became known, some nobles got together and imprisoned her. Thus her plans failed.

Another example of woman taking powers in her own hands is that of Razia. Razia was the daughter of Iltutmish. She was a highly intelligent and talented woman. By her good conduct and behavior, she had so influenced her father, that he had decided to declare her as his successor, ignoring the claims of his sons. Ruknuddin Firoz, Muizuddin Bahram and Nasiruddin Muhamad. Razia claimed her right to rule because she was very intelligent, able and also experienced in the matters of administration. Iltutmish had taken a lot

of pains in bringing up his daughter. He had given her a good education and training in administrative matters also. He wanted to groom her for the take over of the administration.[37] Once, Iltutmish went out of the capital on an expedition in 1231 and at that time he had appointed Razia in charge of the administration at Delhi. Razia conducted the administration very well to the utmost satisfaction of her father.[38]

As preparations were on to put Razia on the throne, there arose a big controversy. Females ruling the kingdom was not much known in this part though it was quite common in Persia.[39] In Persia, two women by the names Purven Dukht and Arjumand Dukht ascended the throne in early seventh century and ruled the country quite successfully. Ever since the Turks established their superiority over the Islamic world, it seems that there was no objection for the rule of women. The Turks also had accepted it.

After the return of Iltutmish to Delhi from Gwalior, he asked his prime minister Tajul Mulk, to write up a decree to the effect that Razia would rule after him.[40] But some noblemen close to him said that there was no need for such a decree as he had grown-up sons a and that they would automatically take up the reigns of administration, but they did not positively raise constitutional objections for a woman to rule the country. Even the Muslim jurists did not raise any objection for the rule by a women,[41] but it is possible that some noblemen could not digest it because it hurt theie male ego.[42] Only in the 7th century, a certain Abdul Haz, expressed his surprise at the

conduct of the Jurists and Sheikhs in accepting Ruzia's accession to the throne.

Ruknuddin occupied the throne and after some time everyone came to know about the misrule and incompetence of Ruknuddin. There fore, Razia appealed to the people and the army to help her in regaining the throne.[43] She further assured the people that she would give an enormously better administration. After regaining the throne. She put the administration on proper track and started ruling quite efficiently.[44] She dealt with the people who opposed her, with a firm hand. She imprisoned many such people. She ruled fairly well for a period of four years (from 1236-40 AD)

Razia's ascendancy to the throne was of great significance. It was the first time that the claim of a woman was accepted largely because of her superior abilities and merits. This made the point quite clear, that even women can become rulers. It indicate the maturity of the minds of Turks fairly well. This was in the thirteenth century.[45] It showed that they accepted merit, regardless of sex. This example of Razia was a source of inspiration for other Mughal Royal women to enter into the filed of politics and rise to the top position.

Nearly 50 years after this incident (Razia coming to the throne) another royal woman rising to power occurred. She was Mallika-i-Fahan, the wife of Jalaluddin and the mother of Ruknuddin Ibralim. She was a highly ambitious woman. She was also a dominating woman and because of her adamant nature her son-in-law, Allauddin left the capital and went to Kara, as the Governor of that Province.

This was in 1291 AD. When Jalaluddin died in 1296 AD she (Mallika), tried her best to bring her son on the throne,[46] ignoring the rightful claim of Jallaludin's eldest son Arkali Khan (He was better known as Rustam-i- Zaman). She wanted to put her son on the throne because then she could rule the country by proxy. She gradually took over the administration and started issuing royal oders.[47] As a result of her high-handedness, her relationship with Akrali Khan became strained. He refused to help her when Alluddin attacked Ruknuddin Ibrahim. In the end Malka-i- Jahan and her son were outsted and they were forced to take shelter with Arkali Khan at Multan.[48]

Sultan Allauddin was an autocratic ruler so , he did not allow either the noblemen or important women of the palace and harem to have their say in the administration.[49]

Yet there are examples when was influenced by ladies to take decision.50 The Tughlas also had lot of respect for women. Muhamad Tughlq had lot of respect for his mother and on account of that he had even allowed her to have a say in the administrative matters of the state, regarding the value for her words, she was above the queens.[51] After the death of Muhamad Tughlq, her sister Khuda Vandzada made an attempt to put her son Dawar Bhaksh on the throne.[52] But by that time, the elders and nobles had already decided that the throne should go to Firoz Tughlaq. Firoz at that time was at Thatta, which was the burial-place of Muhammad Tughlaq She tried her best to put one of her sons on the throne, but in vain. It is rumoured that she

even tried to get Firoz murdered.[53] However her efforts did not succeed.

Even in the period of the Lodhis, women exerased a lot of political powers. In the conflict between Bahlol Lodhi and Sharqi of Jaunpur, a number of women (royal ladies) of Jaunapur interfered in political matters. The wife of Sharqui (of Jaunapur) was the daughter of the ruler of Sayyid by the name of Sultan Alauddin. She was a very ambitious women and wanted to take revenge for the defeat of her father.[54] She instigated her husband to march against Bahlol.

The Sultan Sharqui laid a siege to Delhi. As Bahlol Lodhi was not present, it was defended by Afghans under the leadership of one Bibi Mattu, the widow of Islam Khan.[55]

The mother of Sultan Mahamad Sharqui by the name of Bibi Razi was a wise and gifted woman.[56] When Sultan Muhammad died, she got the help of the Amirs and with their help placed Prince Bhikhan on the throne. She also settled territorial disputes between the territories held by the Sharqi ruler and Bahlol Lodhi.[57] She has a good amount of influence in the political circles of Jaunpur and she was largely responsible in putting Prince Husain on the throne.[58]

Malika-i- Jahan, the queen of Hussain Shah, the last ruler of the Sharqi dynasty. She also meddled in politics to a great extent. She forced her husband invade the territory of Sultan Bahlol, even though there was a treaty between the two.[59]

The women of the Lodhi harem, were also quite active in politics. Sham Khatum, the chief queen of Bahlol Lodhi pressed her

husband not to relax until her brother Qutb Khan was released. Qutb Khan was a captive of Sultan Muhammad Sharqi.[60] Bibi Ambha,[61] was the Hindu wife of Sultan Bahlol and mother of Nizam Khan. Nizam Khan was later known as Sikandar Lodhi. Bibi Ambha was also a very ambitious woman.

After the death of her husband, the claims of her son Nizam Khan to the throne was challenged by one Isa Khan. He was the nephew of Bhalol Lodhi. His argument was that Nizam Khan was not 100% Muslim because he was born to a Hindu woman. To make her son a king, Bibi Ambha took the support of a group of Afghan noblemen under the leadership of Khan-i-Khanan. In an assembly of prominent people she spoke brilliantly (behind a screen, of course), and pleaded the case of her son and forcefully stated that he should be made the king.[62] She finally succeeded in putting him on the throne.[63]

From the above we can see that even in the Lodhi period, women participated in political affairs and many times they were successful in getting whatever they wanted.

The harems of the Turkish and the Lodi Sultans were not large and systematic. It mostly consisted of some royal women, their dependents, domestic servants, maids, slaves and eunuchs. The Sultan was the head and all the members of the harem were directly under him. There were closed and well-guarded units of accommodation inside palace precincts.[64] Purdah was observed even inside the harems also.[65] The internal matters of the harem were

supervised by a Hakeema or a governer, who was usually a member of the royal family.[66] In addition to these things, 'Khawaja Sara' were given the task of protecting the harem from outside.[67] This position was a big and responsible one. Therefore it was given to highly responsible and reliable persons.

In the period of the Sultans, many Hindu women also entered the harem, in many case, of their own tree will. Alauddin's marriage with Kamala Devi, the wife of Rai Karan Baghela of Gujrat and her entry into the harem was one of the earlier cases.[68] Later many such cases of Hindus marrying Mulsim kings and entering the harem also took place. Allauddin married the daughter of Ramachandra Dev.[69] He got his son Khizr Khan married to Deval Devi who was the daughter of Rai Karan.[70] Firoz Tughlak was born of a Rajput woman.[71] Sikandar Lodhi's mother was a Hindu woman.[72] By the stepping of these ladies into the harem, nothing changed much. It shows that sufficient freedom for the women was not given and they were not allowed to develop their intellectual and other capacities. They were never allowed to exert their influence anywhere. The Sultans did not appreciate the Hindu culture very much, neither did they try to assimilate the two cultures.

But some women of the palace were generous and quite liberal. Sha Tukan was known for the encouragement she gave for learning and scholarship.[73] Muhammad Tugalaq's mother was a liberal-minded woman and on account of her liberal outlook she won the respect of all the people. She gave grand parties to foreigners and at

the end of the party, she gave them valuable gifts also.[74] She regularly sent gifts to scholars as a show of respect and encouragement. She appreciated charity and therefore, she built special choultries where free food was served to the needy people and also to the travelers.[75]

Women distinguished themselves in intellectual fields also. Razia's achievements show that the Turkish Royalty had not neglected the aspect of education for their women. She herself was well-educated and she was also a poet. Though there was a strict purdah system, there were many schools and many girls went to these schools.[76] In the primary standards, both boys and girls were taught together. But after the primary education, they were separated. Further education for women was done with the help of private tutors, or they were sent to Institutions, which were meant exclusively for women.[77] Many times girls went to schools which were in private houses.[78] Many times, Muslim widows taught the Quran to the girl-students. Grown-up girls and the girls of higher classes received education from learned women and elders in their own homes.[79] The Maktab ceremony was conducted for both boys and girls and they were also given 'idli' in the same manner.[80]

(Note : Idli was a verse of blessing for girls.) This was given on a coloured paper at the time when a girl started her studies in a Maktab. At that time, she would be asked to read the slip of paper before her parents. Then the parents gave rich presents to the teacher. This particular function is also known as the Maktab ceremony.

Muhammad Tuglak attacked Qurajal Hill. The main reason for this attack was his desire to possess some women of that area because they were highly-talented and women of great learning.[81] In the seraglio of Sultan Ghiyas uddin Khilji of Malwa (From 1469 to 1500 AD) there were many school teachers (all women) and musicians.[82] There were some women who had been appointed to read prayers. All these show that they cared very much, and gave special attention to the education of women. The talents and accomplishments of Deval Bani showed that they (Hindu rulers) gave sufficient amount of importance for the education of their daughters.[83] Apart from the general education, women were keen to learn music and dancing also.

Fatuha and Musrat Khatun were two famous singers of Jalaluddin Khilji's time. They had melodious voices and they had excellent training also.[84] Duktar Khasa, Nusrat Bibi and Mehr Afroz were very good dancers.[85] Women were quite good in playing an instrument called the Tal.[86] They had the capacity to charm people by their fine music. The women performed dances at important functions and ceremonies.[87] Thus it can be seen that the women took a lot of interest in music, dance and similar cultural activities and to the cultural aspects of the society.

So far as, dress was concerned, Hindu women generally wore two types of dresses. One type consisted of a long 'chadar' of thin and fine variety made up of muslin, (it resembled a sari) a choli (blouse) with short sleeves and a dark coloured 'Angiya' (bodice) for grown up

girls and also for married ones. Another type of dress consisted of 'Lahanga' ('Langa', in Kannada long loose skirt), a choli and 'Angiya' with a 'Rupatia'[88] (something, like a long scarf) The latter dress was very popular in Doab. Muslim women wore loose drawers, a skirt and long scarf.[89] In addition to these, they wore a veil. Normally, never wore blue coloured garments, because 'blue' mourning. Women preferred bright colours and printed types. Apart term the dresses described above not much change took place in the dresses of the women during that period.

As far as ornaments were concerned Indian women had a great fancy for them. They were the most important items of their embellishments. Ornaments represented the married status of a woman. A widow, for example, cast off her ornaments. There were many types of ornaments which the women wore from head to toe. Some of them are as follows : 'Shishful' (for the forehead), 'Jhumar' for the head, earrings, necklace, bangales, armlets, bracelets, rings, waistbelt ('patti' in Kannada) and 'Payal' (ornaments of the toes). the Nose-ring was a fine ornament which was introduced during this period. This was imitated from the Muslims.[90] There might have been some small changes in the designs of the ornaments used by Hindu and Muslim women, but basically they were more or less the same.

Apart from ornaments, women spent a good amount of time for their make up. Sandal-paste, musk and various types of scented oils were used by them. In Gujrata and also in the South women massaged themselves with various types of pastes. Dressing of the

hair was given a good amount of importance. The other articles used for embellishments are, collyrium for eyes, some type of black powder for eye-brows, musk for breast, henna for hands and feet, and betal leaves were chewed for making the lips red.[91] The articles of make-up were more or less the same from the earlier times.

Regarding the dress and make-up materials of lower class of women are concerned, much information is not available. Mostly, they followed what the higher class of people did.[92] But this much is definite, with the arrival of the Muslims, the sense of security and safety of women was greatly threatened. The system of ' Purdah' became more rigid, child-marriages became common. Jauhar (equalent of sati, in the case of Muslim women) and 'sati' was quite common.[93] Sometimes even the Muslims Practiced Jauhar.[94]

Firoz Tughlaq and Sikandar Lodhi did not allow Muslim women to go on pilgrimages visit holy places. On the whole, the conditions of Muslim women were not quite satisfactory.

Foot Notes:

1. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, London, 1954, p.91.
2. Altekar, *The position of woman in Hindu Civilization*, Benaras, 1938, pp.21 and 187.
3. Altekar, *The position of woman in Hindu Civilization*, Benaras, 1938, p.182.
4. R.N. Saletore, *Life in Gupta Age*, Bombay, 1943, p.182.
5. C.V. Vaidya, *History of Medieval India*, Vol. I. Poona, 1921, p.6.
6. K. M. Ashraf, *The Life and Condition of the People of Hindustan* Calcutta, 1935, p.245.
7. A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, Loandon, 1954, p.178.
8. Rekha Mishra, *Women in Muqhal India,* Delhi, 1967, p.2.
9. Madhavanand and Majumdar, *Great Women of India*, Almora, 1953, p.5.
10. Madhavanand and Majumdar, *Great Women of India*, Almora, 1953, p.30.
11. Rekha Mishra, *Women in Mughal India*, Delhi, 1967, p.3.
12. Rekha Mishra, *Women in Mughal India*, Delhi, 1967, p.3.
13. Ibid, p.3.
14. Basham, *The Wonder that was India,* London, 1954, p.179.
15. Altekar, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*, Benaras, 1938, pp.15-16.
16. Ibid, p.20.
17. Rekha Mishra, *Women in Mughal India, Delhi*, 1967, p.4.
18. Ibid, p.4.

19. Ibid, p.4.

20. Ibid, p.4.

21. Ibid, p.4.

22. Altekar, *Position of Women in Hindu Civilization,* Benaras, 1938, pp.298-99.

23. Ibid, p.302.

24. Ibid, p.298.

25. Basham, *The Wonder that was India, London,* 1954, p.212.

26. Altekar, *Position of Women in Hindu Civilization,* Benaras, 1938, p.300

27. Rekha Mishra, *Women in Mughal India,* Delhi, 1967, p.5.

28. Basham, *The Wonder that was India,* London, 1954, p.211.

29. Altekar, *Position of Women in Hindu Civilization,* Benaras, 1938, p.300.

30. Ibid, p.300

31. Ibid, pp.214-17.

32. Ibid, p.179.

33. Ibid, p.188.

34. Ibid, p.182.

35. Rekha Mishra, *Women in Mughal India,* Delhi, 1967, p.6.

36. Ibid, p.6.

37. Ibid, p.7.

38. Ibid, p.7.

39. Ibid, p.7.

40. Ibid, p.7.

41. Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, Allahabad, 1936, p.29.

42. Ibid, p.28.

43. Rekha Mishra, *Women in Mughal India*, Delhi, 1967, p.8.

44. Ibid, p.8.

45. Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, Allahabad, 1936, p.29.

46. Rekha Mishra, *Women in Mughal India*, Delhi, 1967, p.9.

47. Ibid, p.9.

48. Ibid, p.9.

49. Ibid, p.9.

50. Amir Khusru, *Deval Rani Khizr Khan*, Aligarh, 1955, p.172.

51. Ishwari Prasad, *History of Qaraunah Turks in India*, Allahabad, 1936, p.310.

52. Afif, *Tarikha-I-Firoz Shahi*, Aligarh, 1956, p.56.

53. Ibid, p.66.

54. Niamatullah, *Makhazan-i-Afghana*, Tr by Nirod Bhushan Roy, Shantiniketan, 1958, Tr.p.36.

55. Ibid, p.13.

56. Ibid, p.13.

57. Ibid, p.37.

58. Ibid, p.45.

59. Ibid, p.45.

60. Ibid, p.38.

61. Ibid, p.24.

62. Ibid, Tr. p.24.

63. Ibid, Tr. p.24.

64. Rekha Mishra, *Women in Mughal India*, Delhi, 1967, p.11.

65. Ibid, p.11.

66. Ibid, p.11.

67. Ibid, p.11.

68. Amir Khusru, *Deval Rani Khizr Khan*, Tr by S.A.A. Rizvi, Aligarh, 1955, p.172.

69. Rekha Mishra, *Women in Mughal India*, Delhi, 1967, p.12.

70. Amir Khusru, *Devel Rani Khizr Khan*, Tr. by Rizvi in Khilji Kaloon Bhaeat, Aligarh, 1955, p.173.

71. Rekha Mishra, *Wommen in Mughal India*, Delhi, 1967, p.12.

72. Niamatullah *Makhzani-i-Afghana*, Tr by Bhushan Shantiniketan, 1958, Tr. p.24.

73. Rekha Mishra, *Women in Mughal India*, Delhi, 1967, p.12.

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75. Ibid, p.12.

76. N. N. Law *Promotion of learning in India*, London, 1916, p.201.

77. Jafar, *Education in Muslim India*, Lahore, 1936, p.85.

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81. Ishwari Prasad, *History of Qaraunah Turks in India*, Allahabad, 1936, p.132.

82. *Law Promotion of Learning in India*, London, 1916, p.201.

83. Asharaf, Life and Condition of the People of Hindustan, Calcutta, 1935, p.243.

84. Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz shahi* Tr by S.A.A. Rizvi in Khilji Kaleen Bharat, Aligarh, 1955, p.16.

85. Ibid.

86. Amir Khusru, *Devel Rani Khizr Khan* Tr by S.A.A. Rizvi in Khilji Kaleen Bharat, Aligarh, 1955, p.16

87. Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* Tr by S.A.A. Razvi in Tughalq Kaleen Bharat (II), Aligarh, 1956, p.144.

88. Asharaf, *Life and Condition of the People of Hindustan,* Calcutta, 1935, p.278.

89. Ibid., p.278.

90. Altekar, *Position of Women in Hindu Civilization,* Benaras, 1938, p.302.

91. Asharaf, *Life and Condition of the People of Hindustan,* Calcutta, 1935, p.280.

92. Ibid., p.243.

93. Ibid., p.256-261.

94. Ibid., pp.256-261.



Chapter - 3

BIRTHS, BEGINNING, MARRIAGE AND OTHER RELATED PRACTICES AND CUSTOMS

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In the male dominated world of those days, the birth of a girl-child was never welcome. In fact, it was considered an unpleasant event among both the Hindus and the Muslims. The birth of a girl child was considered burden or nuisance. The woman who gave birth to a female child was looked down by both men and women close to her. On the other hand, if she gave birth to a male-child, she was considered as having done a good job and she was given much respect and value.[1] Regarding the birth of a girl in the Hindu family, Buck writes:" On the birth of a girl, there is very little rejoicing, for daughters cannot carry on the ceremony necessary for their ancestors' souls and they are regarded as expensive luxuries.[2] According to Abul Fazl, if a Hindu woman gave birth to daughters in succession, she was ordered to undergo some sort of penance. Dubois also tells about the pitiable conditions of a mother who gave birth to daughters continuously. Referring to the birth of a girl amongst Rajputs, James Todd says, "When a female is born, no anxious enquiries are made about the mother, the newcomer is never welcome in a significant way."

Among many sects of Hindus and especially amongst Rajputs, killing babies soon after their birth, was quite common. In those days a female child was never liked and therefore, they killed the child soon

after its birth or during infancy. This was largely prevalent among the poorer sections of the people.[3] Regarding the matter, Jafar Sharif writes "Though the desire for a male child does not influence Muslims to the extent as Hindus, who believe that it is only a son who can perform the funeral rites which admit the spirit of his father into the company of his sainted ancestors. Still among Musalmans, the craving for a male heir is quite intense.[4]

When a woman was pregnant, both Hindus and Muslims observed a number of rites and practices to ward off evil spirits. These rituals were practices by women only. In many cases, these practices and rites were common to both Hindus and Muslims.[5] In order to ward off evil spirits, Muslim women did not wear ornaments and other cosmetics during pregnancy. During pregnancy, they did not touch a coconut etc. Among the Hindus, a coconut was not broken in front of a pregnant woman.[6]

A Muslim woman wore a silk thread around her waist. At the end of every month, they tied a knot on the string. This was done to keep an exact count of the period of pregnancy. She was not supposed to visit a house where a death had occurred recently. She was also forbidden from visiting the death sites. She and her close relatives did not eat anything during the period of eclipse. It was a common belief that if some body smoked before a pregnant woman the child would have a weak heart.[7] They conducted a special celebration when the pregnant women completed four months and five days of pregnancy. About this, Jaffar Sharif writes "shaked lime is served

with the food as a sort of ordeal, because it is supposed not to burn the mouth of a chaste woman. The glance of no male, not even that a boy, must fall on the food thus served."[8]

It was the custom of the Muhammadans, that the first child should be born in her mother's house[9] [This custom was also common in Hindus. About this, Dubois writes: "In any caste, it would be considered a disgrace to the woman, and in a less degree to her parents, if her first child were born anywhere but under the paternal roof] At the time of delivery of the child, the woman was made to lie in such a way hat the head was towards the North. The idea was that if she died in that position, while delivering the child, she would be cremated in the same direction[10] [A Muslim woman was provided with a mat or canvas bag known as 'Tat', after her delivery and she was asked to sleep on it for seven days.[11]

At the time of her continement, there was a midwife to help her during the delivery. She (the mid wife) was ignorant and careless and because of this any infection have been caused. Many times, the infection could have been very fatal (to both the mother and the child).[12] If the labour pain continued for a long time, they performed a number of poojas and other such practices, so that the woman would come out of the ordeal safely. They gave alms to the poor, offering prayers to the Almighty and also they hung an amulet from the woman's thigh. They dipped the beard of a holy man in water and that water was given to a woman who faced difficulty in delivering the child.[13]

Sometimes a coin with Akbar's name was dipped into water and that water was given to the women who was undergoing the pain of child birth to be drunk like a medicine. A Muslim woman was not allowed to sleep on a charpai (bedstead) after her delivery.[14] Immediately after delivery, she was asked to swallow a piece of copper which in their opinion, was a good medicine.[15] After this, the midwife cut the umbilical cord or navel string with a knife.[16] The chord was then kept in a pot and a copper coin was placed in it. A betel leaf was also put with it and the the was buried in a corner of the room.[17]

In the Royal Houses, the umbilical cord of a child was cut with a string. It was then placed in a bag and put under the head of the child. There were some writings on it. After that, a yellow thread of silk was tied around the neck of the child with a knot.[18] The woman was given some asafetida (Hing) soon after the delivery of the child, in order to prevent her from catching a cold.[19] During the period of confinement, special care was taken to serve her special and good food. Her food mainly consisted of special bread, ghee and sugar. This type of food was given to increase the flow of breast milk. They gave some special food during the period of lactation.[20] In Gujarat, they were given some other type of special food. This was known as 'Ghutti.' This was made from aniseed, myrobolan, dried leaves of roles, senna and droppings of mice or goats.[21]

The parting of the hair ceremony (called 'patti') was done on the third day after the birth of the child. Some women were invited on that occasion and they dressed the mother and the child with red cloth.

They then tied a hand-kerchief around the mother's head.. Later on, they heaped cakes and betel leaves on the lap of the mohter.[22] On the sixth day after the birth of the child, they performed another ceremony called 'chhathi.'[23] At this time they gave the new mother a special bath which consisted of a decoction of herbs and leaves. On this day, the midwife was given some gifts. Then, the mother emerged out of the delivery-room with the child. She would be holding a copy of the Qoran and she stipped out with her eyes shut. After some time, she would open her eyes and look to the sky seven times.[24] She was supposed to be unclean for forty days, and in that period, her relatives never accepted any food touched by her. Only after forty days, she could freely mix with others.

Even the Hindus, like the Muslims, observed a number of formalities, during pregnancy. In this regard, Dubois writes: " She must then avoid the company of women of doubtful virtue and of those who had lost children at birth etc. She must drive away from her mind all sad thoughts, she must be careful not to gaze at terrifying objects or to listen to sad stories, or to anything that is indigestible.[25]

When it is confirmed that a Hindu woman has become pregnant she would have to put up with a lot of restrictions regarding her diet. She was not allowed to eat pepper or meat. She was asked to eat only a small quantity of salt.[26] A woman was supposed to be unclean from the commencement of sixth month onwards. During this period, her relatives did not eat food prepared by her.[27] At the time of delivery,

Hindu women also observed certain protective measures, because pregnancy, and delivery of the child entailed a good amount of risk. To invoke the blessings of God, they dedicated the child that would be born to God.[28] (For example, if the child born was a girl, they dedicated the girl to God, by making her a 'devadasi'). The Jats also used a number of charms to stop accidental miscarriages. A pregnant woman was advised to keep some of the following as a safety measure :

a) A coin which had been thrown over the coffin of an old man or woman (b) a piece of wood on a scaffold (c) a nail or flash of a tiger.[29] In Bengal, a ceremony was observed in the fifth month of the pregnancy. It was known as 'Panchamruta.' [30] A peculiar custom was observed by the merchant class in Bengal. They had to go on long tours in connection with their business. At If a woman was in the initial stages of pregnancy, her husband had to give a letter to the effect that she had become pregnant by him alone. Such a letter was known as " Jayapatra" and it was intended to protect the honour of the women. In 'Mangal Chandir Geet' of Dwija Mahadev there is a mention of Khulana, who was the wife of Dhanapati. On his departure to Ceylon (on his business) he had given her a 'Jayapatra' [31] About this, T.C. Dasgupta writes as follows :

The custom of keeping a written document (Jayapatra) from a husband going abroad for a long period on trade purposes by his wife under certain circumstances was most peculiar. This was done to

save the wife giving birth to a child during the absence of her husband (generally a merchant), from dishonour or calumny.[32]

She was given a separate room at the time of delivery. About this, Manucci remarks, "When she is in child-bed she has a little liberty. She has to retire to a separate room kept for this special purpose, where no one speaks to her."[33] She was assisted by a midwife in the delivery room. If the new born child was a boy, there was much excitement and joy. It was customary among the Jats to announce that a girl was born, when in reality, the child born was a male child. On the contrary, if a girl was born, it was announced that a stone was born.[34] Among the Muslims, when a son was born, it was dressed like a girl, to ward off the evil eyes of others. [35]

The room where delivery took place was kept warm with great care. A hearth was kept constantly burning and incense sticks were also burnt in large number.[36] To ward off any evil influence, the Hindus took the following precautions :

i. Water was constantly kept in the room. It was believed that evil spirits never come near water.

ii. Some weapons were placed near the mother and the child because evil spirits never come where there are weapons.[37]

iii. It was a bad omen for the mother to see a cat. She should not even hear the name of the cat. The worst thing for a pregnant woman was to see a cat in her dreams. It was presumed that evil spirits came in the form of cat.[38]

iv. The mother and the baby were not allowed to come out of the room, for thirteen days from the date of delivery.[39]

After delivery, the woman took a bath on the first, fifth, sixth, seventh, eleventh and twenty-second day. She was not considered as sufficiently clean until the 22nd day.[40] [Dubois says that the period of uncleanliness was one month. During this period, a Hindu woman was not supposed to touch anything in the house. This was done so with a view to give complete rest to the mother] Only the midwife was allowed inside the room. Mannucci says, " Her food is left at a distance ; no one approached her."[41] On 6th day, a ceremony was performed (this is called 'chhathi' and in Bengal it is called 'shhasthi' or 'satiyara')[42] and on this day, Goddess Bidhata Mata was worshipped for this ritual there is no role for the priest. It is performed entirely by women. The women male an idol of cow dung and cover it with a red cloth and worshipped the idol. This was kept in the house for thirty-eight days and later on immersed in a well.[43]

Among the Hindus, the 'Annaprashana'[44] ceremony was observed when the child was seven months old. On this day, the child is given cooked rice for the first time. The Muslims celebrated the first birth anniversary of the child in a grand way. To a string, the old ladies tied a knot(representing the completion of one year) and the mother preserved that string.[45] Regarding the way this was observed in the palace, Manucci says "The next year on the same day they make another knot and a feast is held as before. This procedure is continued till the end of life."[46]

From the above descriptions, we come to the conclusion that the birth of a girl was never a welcome event. Nobody wanted a female child and this attitude of the society, it is needless to say, that the entire life of women became miserable, and unbearable.

Early Marriages : The practice of early marriages was very common in the Mughal days. This practice became more common during the Muslim rule. But in ancient Indian society, it was not so. In that era, adult marriages were vogue.[47] [About adult marriages in ancient India, Mitter observes : "The bride in the Vedic period was an adult and mature woman."]

Both Hindus and Muslims conducted early marriages. Regarding the reasons for early marriages Fitch writes : "They say they marry their children so young, because it is in order that when a man dies, the woman must be burned with him ; so that if the father die, they may have a father in law to look after them."[48] In this regard, Withington says , " The reasons why they marry them so young is in regard they would not leave their children wive less."[49] [Roster in his book, 'Early Travels in India says, "But these were not the only reasons which compelled the Hindus to resort to this practice. It was the growing insecurity of contemporary social and political life which forced the Hindus to marry off their daughters at a very tender age. To save the chastity and honour of their daughters from the Muslim raiders, the Hindus tried their best to give their daughters in marriage as early as possible][50] Pelsaert says, " The Hindus join their children in marriage at the age of only four or five year.[51] The Venot says "In

extreme cases, the girls were married at the age of seven or eight years and they started bearing children from the tenth year onwards."[52] Referring to the province of Baglana[53] he again writes: "In this province, the Indians marry their children very young. They celebrate matrimony at the age of four five or six years."[54] Manucci says that many times the children were married even before they were able to talk.[55] Della Valle also tells about early marriages of those times.[56] Terry says that they were married when they were six or seven years old.[57] Sometimes the marriages were contracted when the babies were in the wombs of respective mothers.[58] Mandela in this regard writes as follows : "They (Hindus) marry their children very young, which is the less to be wonder at, in as much as, it is very certain that the Indians of both sexes capable of engendering much sooner than any other nation; so that they are not any but are fit for the work of generation at ten or twelve years of age.[59] A Hindu father was expected to get his daughter married in the maximum before eleven years. If he did not do so, he was considered a shameful person. It was no doubt, difficult for him to find a suitable groom for his daughters.[60] If a father was able to get his daughter married at the age of nine, he was considered a lucky person. But it was more desirable to get the marriage of a daughter done at the age of seven.[61] Gareri writes : " The Mahometan Indians marry very young.[62] [Muslims contracted the marriages of their children at the age of six or seven. But marriage for a boy would be of eighteen years and the girl of thirteen years] Terry says, "They marry for most part at the ages of twelve or thirteen.[63] In Hindi and Bengali literature of those times, we find many cases of

early marriages. Malik Muhamad Jayasi in his literary work of 'Padmavat' says that the king of Ceylon had arranged the marriage of his daughter Padmavati when she was twelve years of age.[64]

In 'Kavikankan Chandi' a literary work by Mukundram, there is a reference to Kalketu's marriage when he was just a child.[65] In another Bengali work called 'Mangal Chandeer Geet' written by Dvija Madhav, there is a reference to an early marriage. A poet refers to the marriage of Dhanapati who was a rich person in Bengal to Lahana. At the time of marriage, Dhanapati was just five years old.[66] A poet named Vrinda VanDas has written a fine literary work titled 'Chaitanya Bhagavat' His mother, Narayani, was married when she was only four years old.[67] [Anandamoyee, a renowned Bengali poetess, had been married when she was just nine years old] Generally the Mughal princesses were used to get married at the age of 16.[68] [Abdul Fazl says that the marriage of prince Murad was fixed when he was only seventeen years of age. Prince Salim's marriage was conducted when he was just sixteen. Emperor Aurangzeb got his son married when he was just fifteen and half years of age. His other son Kambhaksha was married when he was fourteen years of age] It is interesting to note that no money was set apart for the marriage of the princesses. In fact, they were not much interested in getting their daughters married. They were made to spend their whole life in the royal seraglio.[69] Abul Fazl says that Prince Murad was married when he was just seventten years of age. Akbar was against marrying off the daughters of the royal family. He, in fact formulated strict rules to prevent their early marriages. Regarding the Emperor's decision, in

not getting the daughters married. Bernier writes as follows "The marriage of a princess being of rare occurrence in Hindustan, no man being considered worthy of royal alliance; and an apprehension being entertained that the husband might there by be rendered powerful and induce perhaps to aspire to the crown."[70] But his regulation received a fatal blow during the reign of Aurangzeb, who in spite of his Puritanic and orthodox attitude, disobeyed it, under the pressure of his daughters, who wanted to get themselves married]

Though early marriages were quite common, adult and self-chosen marriages were also common. In Hindi, Bengali and Oriya literature of those times, there were many cases in which the girls chose their own mates by the method of 'Swayamvara'. The heroine in "Bharat Chandra Granthavali had taken a vow that she would marry only a person who could defeat her in literary discussions. On account of this vow of hers her parents became worried. At last, a prince named Sunder defeated her. She then gladly married him.[71] Her name was Vidya and she was married when she was about sixteen years of age. Thus we can say that the "Adult marriage" was also quite in vogue in that period. It was especially popular in the higher strata of the society.[72] Banamali Das also refers to this in his "Ichchawati Havan" which shows that this custom was quite prevalent among the higher class of people of those days.[73] In another literary work of the same period, 'Kavipriya', its poet Keshavadas refers to 'Swayamvara." He also writes about the Swayamvara of Sita.[74]

Among the Rajputs, people of higher classes. 'Swayamvara' was a general practice. The Rajput princesses had this right and they enjoyed it also.[75]

Aurangzeb wanted to marry the princess of Rupnagar. She hated him and called him a monkey-faced man. She was unwilling to marry him so she herself invited Rana Raj Singh of Mewar to marry her and save her honour.[76] [This practice of chosen marriage was also prevalent in earlier times]

Even though, Hindus and Muslims conducted the marriages of their children at a very young age, their actual married life started much later. About this, Thevenot writes, "They celebrated matrimony at the age of four, five or six years and suffer them to bed together when the husband is ten years old and the wife eight."[77] Terry also says 'When they attain the age of thirteen or fourteen or fifteen years, they bed together.[78] About this, Manucci says" But the father and mother-in-law do not deliver their daughters to their son-in-law until she has attained puberty."[79] Even the Muslims observed this practice.[80]

When a girl attained puberty, the Hindus celebrated the occasion with real joy. About this; Manucci says "On the day that the girl attains puberty, the father announces the fact to all his relatives and friends and calls upon them to rejoice with him... and this day is called the day of second marriage of wedding feast of puberty.[81] During the period of menstruation a Hindu girl observed a number of rites. She was kept separately in a room and was not allowed to see

the sun or the face of a male. She was kept in a room, which in Bengali is known as 'TirGhar.'[82] During this time, she was to sleep on a mat. The rites which she observed were similar to those observed by women after child birth. This ceremony was known as "Ritu" Sanskar in Bengal.[83] Regarding this Duboisis says "The young woman herself cannot appear, because she is for the first time in her life, in a state of un-cleanliness and for several days, she is obliged to remain in a separate part of the house. But after she has gone though the usual rites of purification, she returns to the family, and a numberless other ceremonies are performed over her.[84]

Foreign travelers recognized the evil of early marriages. Due to early marriages, young girls became mothers at a very tender age and this naturally affected their health. Regarding the poor health of young mothers. The venot says "But the women who have children so young, soon leave off child bearing and commonly do not conceive after thirty year of age, but became extremely wrinkly."[85]

Stavorinus also tells us about the bad effects of early marriages. He says, "Girls, as in all warm climates, are marriageable at an early age, and they cease like wise to bear children very soon."[86] Akbar tried his best to stop early marriages. In this connection Abul Fazl observes, "He abhors marriages which take place between men and women before puberty. They bring forth no fruit and his majesty thinks them even harmful; for afterwards, when such a couple ripens into man-hood, they dislike having connection and their home is desolate.[87] About Akbar's orders on early marriages, Badaoni writes,

"He forbade girls before fourteen years and boys before sixteen years from getting married.[88] The settlement of marriage between boys and girls was entirely the business of the elders. As per the conventions that were there in the society boys and girls were not expected to give any opinion about their marriage.

As the girl herself was a minor, she giving any opinion about her marriage, was never possible.[89] Many marriages were very unhappy and unsuccessful. Akbar issued an order to abolish child marriages and Abul Fazl writes as follows - "Here in India, where a man cannot see the woman to whom he is betrothed, there are peculiar obstacles; but his majesty maintains that the consent of the bride and the bride groom and the permission of the parents are absolutely necessary in marriage contracts.[90] Akbar appointed two officers called 'tai begi' (meaning master of marriages) to keep a watch over the ages of the young people who were to be married. He also leveled a tax on the marriages. The tax that was levied depended up on the economic status of the two parties. This tax was gladly given by the concerned parties.[91]

In those days, an old man marrying a young girl was quite common, among both Hindus and Muslims. Travelers of those days and many literary works of those times give a number of examples of such unmatched marriages. The Hindu society had approved such marriages. In fact the prevailing idea of those times, regarding the age of the partner was that the wife should be about 1/3rd the age of the husband.[92] In this regard, Manucci says, "Ordinarily, the marriage is

between a little child and a grown up man.[93] Pelsaert says, " Old men have to marry children because there are no grown up maids to be found."[94] The practice of old people marrying young girls was very common especially in Bengal. The father of a young girl never hesitated in giving his daughters to an old man. In the literary work 'Bharat Chandra Granthavali' there are many instances of such marriages. The poet gives graphic description regarding the sad plight of the young girls, being married to old people.[95] This evil existed among the Muslims also. When Emperor Humayun was thirty-three years old, he married Hamida Banu who was just a girl of fourteen.[96]

Another important factor that prevailed at that time was 'Kulinism'. A Kulin Brahmin never gave his daughter in marriage to a non-kulin.[97] (A person whose ancestry was spotless from the point of view of caste was known as a 'kulin'). It was considered as a great loss of prestige on the part of a 'kulin', if ever he gave his daughter in marriage to the family of non-kulins.

A kulin girl who married a non kulin very rarely visited the house of her husband. After the marriage, she was left in her parents house. She could see her husband only very rarely.[98] In his famous literary work 'Granthavali' Bharat Chandra refers to the sorry state of affairs of such girls, who fell prey to this evil customs.[99]

Marriages between Hindus and Muslims was also fairly well-spread. Muslims freely married Hindu girls. Emperor Akbar himself had married many Rajput princesses.[100] (Akbar had for example, had married the daughter of Biharimal. Apart from Mughal Emperors,

some Muslim noble men also married Hindu girls.[101] Akbar's son Jahangir had also married a number of Hindu and Rajput ladies.[102]

[Jahangir married the daughter of Raja Bhagavan Das. He also married a daughter of Ray Ray Singh , son of Ray Kalyan Mal of Bikaner, on the 19th Rajeb 994 A.H. Besides them, he also married the daughter of Uday Singh, who was the son of Raja Maldeo, in 944 A.H. She became the mother of Emperor Shahjahan. Jahangir had also married the daughter of Raja Kesudas Rathor. A nobleman in Akbar's court Abdul Rahim married a Brahmin lady name Krishna.[103] In a Bengali literary work titled "Vrihah Banga", a Hindu boy marries a Muslim girl. A Brahimn boy, Kala Pahar married princess Dulari Biri the daughter of the Nawab of Gaur (Bengal).[104] Another Hindu Jayachandra married a Muslim girl. He also converted to Islam.[105] There are many instances of marriages between Hindus and Muslims in the memoirs of Emperor Jahangir. "They (Rajaur) ally themselves with Hindus and both give and take girls. Taking them is good, but giving them, God forbid."[106]

The practice of Muslim girls, marrying Hindus was never liked by Emperor Jahangir. He issued orders to the effect that Muslims should not give their daughters to Hindus. He further stated that those who disobeyed this order would be punished with death.

Both Hindus and Muslims married in the same caste or profession. Regarding this Bernier writes, "No one marries but in his own trade and profession; and this custom is observed almost rigidly by Mohammatans."[107] About the caste marriages of Hindus. Abul Fazl

says, 'In the present Kaliyuga, no one chooses his wife out of his won caste, each of these four being subdivided into various branches, each subdivisions asks in marriage only the daughters of their own equal."[108] As per the practices that were in vogue at that time, a Baniya (a member of the merchant class) married a girl of his own caste only and from no other caste.[109] Muslims also married in their own caste or tribe.[110]

A number of rites has to be undergone if there was to be a marriage between Hindus and Muslims. Regarding Hindu marriage-ceremonies, Therenot writes, " There are many ceremonies to seen at the weddings in Hindustan because the Gentiles are numerous there."[111] After talks and settlement of the marriage, the betrothal ceremony took place.[112] Marriage negotiation were conducted by Brahmis and also by Ghataks.[114] This was the procedure in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.[115] In Bengla, the same ceremony was called 'Pakadekha.'[116] Marriages among the Hindus generally took place during the nights only. The date and time was fixed by the Pundits. After that, they sent invitations to all by special messengers. The marriage was conducted in the bride's house, in specially constructed 'mantapas' At the 'mantapa' the marriage rituals were held. The bride's house was decorated with flowers and mango leaves.

On the previous night of marriage, the party of the bride groom consisting of his relatives, friends dance parties go to the residence of bride. There, they are greeted by the people of the bride and a fine welcome would be accorded to them. Soft drinks and betel leaves

would then be given to them. Later, they conduct "Dwar - Pooja"[117] The bride groom is given fine sets of clothes. He wears them and goes to the "Lagna Mantapa, where the bride also comes and the marriage ceremonies begin. Afterwards, the father of the girl performs 'Kanya Dan' which signifies the formal handing over of the girl to the bride groom. After this, the hems of the couple are knotted together, which signifies the union of the two for life long. This ceremony is known as 'Ganth'. Among the Rajputs it is known as 'Ganth- Jora.'[118] Afterwards, the significant steps of 'seven steps' together would be undertaken and the couple go around the sacred fire seven times. Among the Rajputs, this procedure is a little different. Rajput couples not go around the sacred fire as mentioned. In stead, they went round a number of pots kept one over the other. These pots were filled with different kinds of grains. This ceremony was called 'Sat-Phera'.[119] After the ceremony, the bride groom applied 'Sindhoor' on the forehead. The next day there was a grand feast for all the relatives at the house of the bride groom.[120] [The above mentioned marriage procedures are generally observed in Bihar, U.P and some other parts of Rajaputana]

On the marriage day, the first thing in the morning was Gaura - Haridar which means rubbing the body with turmeric paste. Both the bride and the groom are anointed with turmeric paste.[121] At this time many presents were sent to the bride's house from the house of the bridegroom. After wards the bride and the bridegroom performed a ritual called 'Vriddhi Shraddha.'[122] After this, a ceremony of fetching water is performed.[123] Both parties performed the ceremony in their

homes. The father of the bride had a sword in his hand his wife an empty pitcher called Hem Ghat.[124]

On the auspicious marriage-night the bride groom came to the bride's house with his relatives and friends and they are taken to the marriage pavilion. The bride is also brought there and the process of giving away the bride to the bridegroom is completed.[125] After this, the ceremony of 'Saptapadi' would be conducted.[126] The new pair is asked to take the seven steps around the sacred fire. At each step they recite some mantras as ordained by the priest. Then vermillion is put on the parting of the forehead of the bride. Other rites are performed by elderly married women and they instruct the bride regarding matters of 'stree Achar.'[127]

The marriages of Muslims also consisted of a number of ceremonies and rites, just like the Hindus. After preliminary talks about the alliance, the next ceremony was the ceremony of betrothal, usually, the marriage ceremony was conducted for three days. (three days and three nights) The first day ceremony of the marriage was known as 'sarchaq'. The second day ceremony was known as 'Manhdi'. The third day ceremony was called 'Barat.'[128] A week before 'Sarchaq' the parents of both the bride and the bride groom sent cooked food for their relatives.[129] On the wedding day the friends and relatives of both the bride and bridegroom sent presents. About this Manucci writes, "These people sent their presents which consisted of an assortment of trays full of fruit, fresh and dried, a quantity of sugar, camels laden with sugar cane, sweetmeats of various colours, rose water, all kinds

of food supplies, butter, oil, pieces of silk and cotton cloth, together with some gold and silver coins.[130]

From the day of 'Sarchaq', the bride was known as Dulhan and the bridegroom was known as 'Dulha.'[131] From that day the bride was confined to a dark room for three days. There were a number of festivities and merriments in both the house of the bride as well as the bridegroom. On the second day they sent 'henna -bandi' to the house of the bride groom.[132] A number of men moving in procession, used to carry these presents. Some female friends of the bride were also asked to take part in the procession. They did so by fully covering their bodies.[133] [When Aurangzeb was married to Dilras Banu Begam, this was done in an extremely grand way] The ladies anointed the hands and feet of the bride groom with the red juice of 'henna' concealing themselves behind the curtain. About this ceremony Manucci says, "They present the bridegroom with a box containing a paste that they call 'mendi'(Menhdi i.e. henna) with this he anoints his hands and nails so that they turn red. After another hour, they wash his hands with rose water and offer the water for him to drink, in the sign of confirmation of the marriage as is the custom."[134] On the day of the marriage i.e on the 'Barat' day the bridegroom wore fine clothes A thin cloth was fixed over his head which tell even his shoulders. He decorated with flowers.

Wearing fine clothes the bridegroom goes to the house of the bride with his friends and relatives. A number of singers and dancers also accompany the 'Barat.'[135] The marriage is then performed by a

Maulvi. The Kazi is also present and registers the marriage in his book.[136] The girls are not allowed to witness the marriage ceremony . Some other ceremonies are conducted and afterwards, the bridegroom sees the bride for the first time through a mirror.[137] Even the royal marriages took place in the presence of the Qazi. The marriages of Prince Saleem, with the daughter of Raja Bhagavandas and that of Aurangzeb with Dilras Banu Begam, also were conducted in the presence of Qazis.

Regarding this ceremony, Manucci says as follows : "he salutes her and makes the customary bows; and the singers, raising their voices, proclaim a welcome to the bridegroom. They also wish happiness in their marriage."[138]

During that eras dowry was an important aspect. In those days, there was no question of marriage without dowry. In the contemporary works of literature, in the writings of foreign travelers and also in various other documents of that period, this aspect of dowry finds mentions In Sri Sri Chaitanya Mangal ' written by poet Jayananda there is a mention of dowry given to Chaitanya Deva. The dowry was given by the father of the girl. Laxmi to the son - in -law.[139] In another work called "Mangal Chandeer Geet" also there is mention of dowry. It is said that king of Singhal (Ceylon) had given a sizable dowry at the time of marriage of his daughter to the son of one Dhanapati.[140] Poet Achutananda also refers to this dowry in his famous work "HariVamsha' This system existed in Orissa also.[141] But, it was not much prevalent among the Brahmins.[142]

Among the lower class of people, the question of dowry was not there. In fact, if the boy wanted a girl, he had to give some money to the father of the girl. In such cases, naturally the position and the status of the bride's father was of a higher order than that of the father of the bride groom, unless the boy's father gave money to the satisfaction of the girl's father, he would never agree to the marriage. In his "Mangal Chandir Geet", Dwija Madhav refers to this system. Dharmaketu gave some costly gifts to the father of the girl, at the time of the marriage of hiss on.[143] The dowry was known in Bengal as 'Potn' or 'Jautuk'[144] and in other parts of North India, it was called 'Tilak or Dehej.'

Accepting dowry was quite common among the Muslims also. The Mughal Emperors were also familiar with this practice.[145] The Rulers of Kashmir had given dowry at the marriage of his daughter.[146]

POLYGAMY

By nature Muslims are not contented with one wife. They desired to have as many wives as possible. Hindus were mostly monogamous by nature. Hindus were allowed to have more than one wife only in some special cases. About this, Abul Fazl writes as follows: "Except the king, it is not considered right for a man to have more than one wife, unless his first wife is sickly or proves barren or her children die."[147] There not says normally Hindus did not keep more than one wife just as Muslims did. Only after the death of a first wife, a Hindu may marry for the second time.[148] Regarding the monogamous tendency of the Hindus. Terry observes "They take but

one wife and of her, they are not so fearful or jealous as the Mohamatans are of their several wives."[149] But there are some exceptions to this tradition. The rich and well to do people generally indulged in polygamy. Regarding the polygamous tendencies among the Hindu Rajas Manucci says, "There have been kings in these days who had as many as five thousand wives."[150]

Polygamy was very common among Rajputs. They married more than one wife. Raja Jaswant Sing had many wives apart from seven concubines.[151] Even merchants of Bengal were many times taking more than one wife.[152] In Ghanaram's work 'Dharma Mangal' we find that the hero, Lausen had married four women and their names were Kalinga, Amala, Bimala, and Kannara.[153] Even the Brahmins were permitted to have as many wives as they could afford. It was a question of status symbol. In this regard Stavorinus says "The Bengalee marry no more than one wife, except the Brahmins who take as many as they like or they can maintain.[154] Keshav Das[155] and Biharilar[156] also agree to this practice amongst the rich and well-to-do persons. Some classes of people in Maharashtra were also polygamous. The father of Shivaji had married another women, even though his first wife Jija Bai was alive.[157] Aziz Koka, a noble man at Akbar's Court clearly says that Muslims Practiced polygamy as a talent. He says, "A man who is well off, needs four wives, an Iraqi (West Persian) for companionship, a Khurasani for house -keeping, an Indian for sexual intercourse and a Transoxiana for whipping so that others may take warning."[158] Regarding polygamy among Muslims.

Terry says, "Mahomet allows four wives. Besides, they take liberty to keep as many women as they are able.[159]

Pelsaert observes : " As a rule, they have three or four wives."[160] De Laeh also agrees to this.[161]

Emperor Akbar framed suitable laws by means by which no one was allowed to have more than one wife. Abul Fazl describes the Emperor's regulations as follows : " No one was allowed to marry more than one wife except in case of barrenness, but in all other cases, the rule was, "One God, One wife."[162]

But these rules and regulations were not well received by the people. Rich people ignored them and continued with their taste in polygamy. After all they loved women and had a flair for costliest hop hobby of men.

Foot Notes:

1. Abdul – Fazl. *Ain-IOAkbari*, III, Calcutta, 1948m p.242.
2. Faiths, *Fairs and Festivals of India*, Calcutta, 1971, p.51.
3. Babool Shere Sad, *Domestic Manners and customs of the Hindoos*, Banaras, 1860, p.151.
4. Colliuer Rice, *Persian Women and their Ways*, London, 1923, pp.123-24.
5. Sharif, *Qanun-i-islam,* London, 1921, p.19.
6. Ibid., p.19.
7. Ibid., p.19.
8. Ibid., p.20.
9. Ibid., p.21.
10. Ibid., p.21.
11. Ibid., p.21.
12. Ibid., p.21.
13. Ibid., p.21-22.
14. Ibid., p.21-22.
15. Ibid., p.22.
16. Ibid., p.22.
17. Ibid., p.22.
18. Ibid., p.22.
19. Ibid., p.23.
20. Ibid., p.24.
21. Ibid., p.24.
22. Ibid., p.35.
23. Ibid., p.35.

24. Ibid., p.36

25. Ila Mukerjee, *Social Status of North Indian Women*, Agra, 1972, p.5

26. Ibid., p.6.

27. Ibid., p.6.

28. Ibid., p.6.

29. Ibid., p.6.

30. Ghanaram, *Sri Dharma Mangal*, Calcutta, 1295, p.55.

31. Ila Mukerjee, Social Status of North Indian Women, Agra, 1972, p.7.

32. Ibid., p.7.

33. Ibid., p.7.

34. Ibid., p.7.

35. C.C. Rice, *Persian Women and their Ways*, London, 1923, p.124.

36. Copper, *The Harim and the Purdah*, London, 1915, p.132.

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Chapter - 4

WOMEN AND THE MUGHAL HAREM

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Originally Arabic the term 'Harem' means a Sanctuary. As time passed by the word 'Harem' became synonymous with the living quarters of the women of royalty as also with the inmates living there The appellation 'Mughal' seemingly causes to evoke a sight of a secluded and isolated world, a world set apart from the mundane world, but an enchanting place of beautiful females in alluring magnificence. It was truly made splendid by the great Mughal emperor Akbar during his long and glorious fifty years of reign (1556-1665). He brought and filled his harem with a large number of beautiful and attractive beauties to adorn and decorate his seraglio. He gave them all the luxuries and made elaborate rules and regulations for their sequester and security. During the reign of his descendants- Jahangir (1606-1627), Shah Jahan (1628-1658) and Aurangzeb (1658-1707) the Mughal Harem was at the height of its excellence and splendor.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE MUGHAL HAREM DURING THE REIGN OF BABUR AND HUMAYUN :

Akbar's Ancestor's harems-Babur's grand father and his father Humayun's - were modestly sized. Babur states many of his several wives by their name. Gulbadan Begum, his daughter gives a list of their names and their many accomplishment and skills. Based on the year of marriage, in chronological serial, several important wives of Babur were mentioned. Aiysha Sultan Begum, Zainab Sultan Begum,

Maham Begum (Humayun's mother), Masuma Sultan Begum, Gulrukh Begum (Kamran and Askari's mother), Dildar Begum (mother of Gulzang, Gulchehra, Hindal and Gulbadan) and Bibi Mubarika.[1] There were also several concubines who were prominent in Babur's harem - they were Gulnar Aghacha and Nargul Aghacha, two Circassian slave girls who were presented by Shah Tahmasp of Persia, now known as Iran.

"Maham Begum was the chief lady of the royal household and mother of Babur's eldest son she was supreme and had well defined rights over other inmates."[2]

The harem of Humayun too, was not very big. His first cousin and later his wife was Bega Begum, whom he had married in his youth. Hamida Banu Begum who was the mother of Akbar, who was given the honourable title of Mariyam Makani (dwelling with Mary). The other wives of Humanun were Mewajan a slave-girl of Gulbadan, Gulbarg Begum, daughter of Nizam-ud- din Khalifa; Gunwar Bibi and Khanish Agha were some of the concubines. Bega Begum or Haji Begum was the head of the seraglio. Bega Begum was captured by Sher Shah in the debacle at Chausa but as a good will gesture sent her back to Humayun. By all counts, the seraglios of Babur and Humayun did not contain more than two hundred inmates each.

Why the harems were not large were because of certain reasons. Babur's life was a chequered one-full of struggle and strifes, mixed with failure and success in equal combination. He was always on the road, either running away from a mighty foe or chasing a defeated enemy. Humayun's life and career was no better. He was able to reign

only for a decade when he lost his realm to Sher Shah. Many of the inmates of Humayun's harem were captured by Sher Shah and were killed in the battle of Chausa or were drowned while crossing deep rivers. Humayun remained a run away and a fugitive in exile for almost fifteen long years. But after recovering his throne in Hindustan he did not live for more than a year to savour the bliss of his restored kingdom. The tenor of his tempestuous life determined the size of his seraglio. In a nutshell, the life and careers of Babur and Humayun made it impossible for them to collect a bevy of beauties after every battle or campaign. However, they did not lack the thrill and sensuousness of love. Masuma Sultan Begum, daughter of Sultan Ahmad Mirza, happened to be the first cousin of Babur. They wedded in 1507, and from his account of this affair it was a reciprocal match from both sides.[3] The love and longing of Babur for Bibi Mubarika reads like a love story from a novelette.[4] Humayun fell deeply in love with Hamida Banu and married her even as he was running away in desperation from Hindustan. In his Tarikh-i-Daudi, Abdulla cites another adventure of Humayun. An extremely beautiful girl was once taken captive by Sher Shah's soldiers and presented to Humayun. The Afghan (Sher Shah) ordered her to be sent to his foe's camp (Humayun's) for he reasoned out, that if he kept such a beautiful damsel with him he would have lived a life of debauchery and his political career would have been ruined. It is reported that when the damsel was presented to Humayun he became so infatuated with her that he became completely indifferent to military strategies and operations resulting finally in the loss of his royal seat.[5] Even if the

legend were true, one thing is certainly true, the first two Mughals evinced no keen interest in collecting a harem. Babur could have been the proud owner of the whole Zenana or harem of Ibrahim Lodi after his great victory at Panipat. Instead, he disbanded the women and gave them away to the noblemen and princes who had stood by him; sending some dancing girls even, to his Begums in Kabul. [6] When all was said and done, he believed in keeping himself to the legally four wives that were permitted by his religion.

THE KEEPING OF FOUR LEGAL WIVES :

The number of women a Muslim man could wed, was a question that posed a problem and was a topic of debate among the sovereign, the noblemen and the courtiers and the Ulema (the Muslim clergy) throughout the Mughal era. "Mussalmans are allowed by the Koran and the Tradition to have four wives".[7] Several serious and not so serious reasons have been put forward and propagated for this number four. One saying goes thus : "One quarrels with you; two are sure to involve you in their quarrels; when you have three, factions are formed against her you love best; but four find society and occupation among themselves, leaving the husband in peace."[8] Another quotation is attributed to Khan-i- Azam Mirza Aziz Koka who says : "A man should marry four wives ; a Persian to have some one to talk to; a Khurasani woman for his housework; a Hindu for nursing his children; a woman from Mewar-un-Nahr or Tramsoxiana, to have some one to whip as a warning to the other three."[9] The third saying is truly pseudo - scientific. A married woman is expected to become pregnant within the first three months of her marriage. Since it is not

healthy or advisable to have sex- relations with a pregnant woman, a second wife is allowed to serve for the next three months. When the third wife is married with her first three months it would cover the period of nine months of the gestation period of the first. The fourth wife is married to serve the purpose of when the first wife is delivered of her baby and has maternal rest for three months, and thereafter is fit for conjugal relations again. That is whey four wives and not three or five is necessary. Whenever a man wants to take a fifth wife, then one of the four wives may be divorced, for four wives would be sufficient for uninterrupted sexual pleasure. This was considered to be customary or traditional and legal status quo. During Akbar's reign his "large number of women (posed) a vexatious question even for great statesmen."[10] Many and heated were the discussions held over this controversial issue, in the Ibadat Khana. The Ulema, Shaikh Abdun Nabi, the Sadr-us- Sudur or the Chief of the Religious Department, was invited to speak on this topic, Akbar placed the problem before the Ulema. Akbar recollected that the Shaikh had once confided to him privately that even more than four wives were permitted. But the Ulema evaded the reply in public. "This annoyed His Majesty very much. "The Shaikh" he said, "told me a very different thing from what he now tells me.' He never forgot this."[11] Akbar's antagonism and his low opinion of the Ulema had, besides other things, origins in such double speak and double thought. Monogamy was out of the question for the Mughals. The Jesuit Fathers who advocated monogamy to Jahangir, could never agree with them.[12] Still in the times of Akbar the topic was heatedly discussed. The

agreement reached by the Ulema in the Ibadat Khana, was that a man was allowed to marry several women by a rite known as 'muta' or temporary marriage but only four by the 'Nikha' ceremony was permitted.[13] There was no restriction on wives with secondary status, in actual practice, especially for the nobles and the kings, for the king was sovereign, the law unto himself.[14] Even so, as it may be but for the practice of plural wives or polygamy which was the confirmed tradition and custom in the Middle Ages Muslim society, both Babur and Humayun bequeathed the notion of a moderate seraglio to their successor and descendant Emperor Akbar.

THE BEQUEST OR HERITAGE OF BABUR AND HUMAYUN :

There were several other customs and traditions too, which the first two Mughal Emperors handed down the legacy to Akbar. One was the filial love for the mother and respect shown to the other senior queens. Babur loved and respected Ehsan Daulat Begum, Qutlugh Nigar Begum and Khanzada Begum, his grand mother, mother and elder sister in order; and how they always supported him and looked after his welfare and safely, is very well -known. Writing about his respectful attitude to old age Mrs. Sp. Beveridge remarks : " Apropos of the aunt of frequent mention it may be mentioned that both Babur and Haider.[15] Convey the opinion that deference to elder women was a permanent trait of their age and set."[16] For example, after Babur had set up his realm in Hindustan, he invited his relatives, aunts, Begums and Khanums from his homeland Kabul to Agra. They arrived : " ninety six persons in all and received houses, lands and gifts to their heart's content."[17] Besides, "to the architect,

Kwaja Qasim, His Majesty gave the following order : " Whatever work, even if it be on a great scale, our paternal aunts may order done in their palace, give it precedence, and carry it out with might and main."[18] Mirza Haider Daghlat gives a pleasing account of the meeting in Kabul in 1506-1507 between Babur and his maternal aunt Mihr Nigar Khanam, the elder sister of his mother, and observes that "The emperor leapt up and embraced his beloved aunt with every manifestation of affection."[19] Then came the sisters. In the Humayun Nama, whenever the word 'harem' is mentioned, sisters take the place of importance and precedence.[20] When Humayun was seriously ill (and legend goes that Babur sacrificed his own life in order to save Humayun), he remembered his sisters most of all. "Every time he came to his senses" Gulbadan observes, "his pearl -dropping tongue asked for us and said, 'Sisters you are welcome ! Come let us embrace one another...' It might be three times that he raised his head and that his jewel-dropping tongue let fall these uplifting words."[21] In the same way, he had the greatest affection and regard for the other members of the royal family.

Such affection was mutual. Bega Begum, also known as Haji Begum was Emperor Humayun's wife and was so devoted to him that she resented even his tiniest neglect.[22] At his demise, she built her husband's monument the renowned Humayun's Tomb at Delhi and even became its faithful and tireless retainer and caretaker.[23] Dildar Begum, the wife of Babur, and mother of the princesses Gulbadan, Gulrang and Gulchehra and prince Hindal, was an attractive woman of sense and is always spoken of with great esteem not only by

Gulbadan, her daughter but even by other historians and chroniclers,[24] while his principal wife, Maham Begum, and Humayun's mother exercised all the power as befitted her exalted position.[25]

There were no restrictions or inhibitions about the 'parda' in the seraglio of the first two Mughal emperors. " It appears probable", notes Annette Beveridge, "That there was no complete seclusion of Turki women from the outside world.... The ladies may have veiled themselves... but they received visitors more frequently..."[26] Senior noblemen and officers of Babur's court entertained and amused the seraglio women with amusing and absorbing stories of Hindustan.[27] We come to know from Gulbadan Begum, that the women of the royal harem of Humayun mixed about freely and socialized with their male acquaintances, friends and visitors. They . even attired themselves in male clothing, played polo and engaged themselves in the learning of musical instruments. They enjoyed complete freedom in the matter of marriage or divorce. They all wedded, and some married again more than once after a divorce. Aiyasha Sultan Begum, Babur's first wife, left him after three years of being married to him.[28] Khanzada Begu, sister of Babur, was at least married thrice.[29] She was first married to Shaibani Khan in 1501. When Shaibani Khan divorced her, she was married off to a certain man named Saiyyad Hada, after whose demise in 1511.[30] Babur gave her away in marriage to Mahdi Khwaja. In 1501, when she was forcibly married to Shaibani Khan, she was just twenty three, and Mrs. Beveridge opines that she had almost surely been married previously.[31] In the same way, Gulbarg Begum,

Nizam -ud- din Dhalifa's daughter was married at first to Mir Shah Hussain Arghaum in 1524 and after a divorce she married Emperor Humayun at some time previous to 1539.[32]

This "comparative freedom gave the (early) Mughal women a greater sense of their dignity and honour."[33] As a consequence, several of them turned out to be impulsive and high-spirited, headstrong women, possessing a flair for making decisions and a will to assert their status. The events leading upto the marriage of Hamida Banu Begum's marriage to Emperor Humayun clearly indicate what a strong, independent personality a Mughal lady of position could be if she if she decided to be. Daughter of Ali Akbar also called Mir Baba Dost[34] who belonged to Mirza Hindal's camp when Humayun's set his eyes on Hamida Banu Begum and he became deeply besotted. When he asked her hand in marriage, she refused. Humayun sent repeated summons but she boldly retorted that " to see kings once is lawful; a second time; it is forbidden. I shall not come."[35] Finding her unmoved and adamant, Humayun appealed to his stepmother Dildar Begum to convince Hamida Banu to consent. Dildar Begum gave her this advice. : "After all, you will marry some one. Better than a king, who is there?" Hamida Banu retorted : "Oh, yes, I shall marry some one; but he shall be a man whose collar my hand can touch, and not one whose skirt it does not reach." [36] She refused to marry the 'Emperor' for days and weeks and kept him in great suspense. "At last (and only) after forty days' discussion and persuasion", Humayun was able to marry the one whom he so deeply adored.

THE LEGENDS AND TRADITIONS SET UP BY AKBAR

Akbar followed the customs and traditions of his predecessors in many ways though not in all. In so far as deference and respect for the senior women of the court and love for the junior members of the household were concerned, Akbar and his descendants continued the practice established by Babur and Humayun. The monarch's mother was a very special person to him. She was even more highly - placed and exalted than even his principal wife.[37] "In fact, in the Mughal times the first lady of the realm was not the Empress Consort (except in the case of Nur Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal) but the royal mother or the royal sister."[38] Sultan Salima Begum, the senior consort of Akbar, occupied a position of great influence in the imperial household, and so also Mariyam 'Makani, the mother of Akbar. Both these royal women were highly revered and esteemed by Akbar and Jahangir.[39] Coryat mentions, that, once when Akbar's mother was carried in a palanquin from Lahore to Agra, " he traveling with her, took the palanquin upon his own shoulders, commanding his greatest nobles to do like, and so carried her over the river from one side to the other."[40] At any time, whenever Mariyam Makani arrived from a journey, Akbar himself went out of the city to welcome and bring her.[41] In his Memoir, Jahangir recalls at many junctures in his life, the great felling about his own mother, Mariyam -uz- Zamani.[42] It was at her house that the solar and lunar 'weighing' of the emperor took place and the marriages of the princes were celebrated.[43] Hawkins also mentions that during the Nauroz festival, "After many sports and pastimes performed in his palace, he goes to his mother's

house with all the better sort of his nobles, where every man presented a jewel unto his mother according to his estates."[44] Respect for and service to one's parents was practiced.[45]

In the Mughal household, which was mainly polygamous, there were, besides the biological mother, several foster mothers. Akbar as a small infant had been separated from his mother, because of his father's political vicissitudes and adverse changes of his uncertain life style. Consequently, many other women had breast bed him. These wet-nurses or foster-mothers were mostly women of good birth and breeding and were known as Anagas. A few of these wet-nurses are stated. These were Daya Bhawal or Bawal Anagha, Humayun's concubine;[46] Nadim Kokas' queen Fakhr-un-nisa and Shams-ud-din's queen Jiji Anaga.[47] Koki Anaga, the queen of Togh Begi; Bibi Rupa; Kildar, Anaga; Pija Jan Anaga, the mother of Saadat yar Koka; the 'Mother Zain Khan Koka; a woman called Hakima, and the most prominent of all Maham Anaga. Later on, Maham Anaga was Enyrusted the care of the harems of Akbar in the beginning of his rule. She was addressed as the 'Mother or Walida'[48] and had a great influence on the young lad who was crowned as the king.[49] Besides Anagas their sons and also their husbands were addressed as Kokas and Atkas[50] who thronged the court and the palace and tried to extract a good profit, advantage and benefit from their status. Adham Khan, Maham Anagas son created a lot of trouble tensions emperor Akbar. Tensions were also created sometimes by these foster-mothers due to their petty rivalries, and jealousies,[51] Yet, all the kings revered and esteemed the Anagas as they would their own mother.[52] So also,

the Mughals revered and adored their sisters. Deep emotional, sentimental statements to his sisters are made by Jahangir. His affection love for Shakr-un-nisa Begum his sister, was "Such as children feel for their mothers"[53] His memoirs mentions their position when contrasted with that of the other women of the harem.[54] Even. Aurangzeb, ever suspicious and puritanical, greatly reversed his elder sister Jahan Ara Begum, although she showed great respect, affection to Dara Shukoh.

THE HAREM OF AKBAR AND HIS SUCCESSORS :

Akbar did not continue the traditions and customs of his grandfather and father, with regard to the size and organization of the harem. He followed the precedent of the Sultans of Delhi instead. The size of the harem determined the stature and importance of a ruler was the belief in the Sultanate Period. Sultan Ala-ud-din Khalji (1296-1316) was advised by Quazi Mughis-ud-din that the expenditure of the harem be increased ten-fold because a large and opulent seraglio would create awe and wonder and enhance esteem and reverence for the king in the minds of the common people.[55] Such grandiose notions made it almost compulsory for the king to have the largest seraglio as compared to that of his noblemen or even that of the independent neighboring rulers. The Sultans of Delhi maintained large seraglios with all their ornamentations and accoutrements. Even a Wazir like Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul could brang of about two thousand women in his harem. But the most remarkable case is that of Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din of Malwa (1469-1500). "Ghiyas-ud-din found his own chief amusement in the administration of his

harem, which it was his fancy to organize as a kingdom in miniature, complete in itself. Its army consisted of two corps of Amazons, of 500 each, one of African and one of Turkish slave girls, who at public audiences were drawn up on either side of the throne. The harem contained, besides these, 16000 women, who were taught various arts and trades and organised in departments. Besides there were musicians, singers and dancers... These women were recruited, at a great trouble and expense, from all parts of India... No old or ugly woman ever appeared before the Sultan. The King himself regulated with meticulous nicety the pay and allowances of all.. and decided disputes.. when not thus employed, he devoted himself to the ceremonies of his faith, with which the daily life of a devout Muslim is encumbered."[56] Nasir-ud-din his son was not any better.

Thus, the big harem was in the practice even in pre Mughal Hindustan, and Emperor Akbar but continued with the practice. What contributed to the largeness of the Mughal harem during Akbar's times and after, was due to a number of factors. Akbar was the mightiest ruler of Hindustan. He had no equal or peer, he was all-powerful (or Mahabali) He launched a series of campaigns which lasted through out his life time and continued by even his successors and descendants. Every conquest generally ended with a marriage or union between the Mughal king or prince with a maiden of the conquered ruler's family and she and her maid servants brought in a large number of her female household members into the Harem. The Rajput princesses in particular, brought along with them several hundreds of maids and dancing girls.[57] Young maidens of the foe

slain in battle were brought into the harems of the king and the noblemen. For the security and effective supervision of these seraglios a large number of eunuchs was needed. Hundreds of men were castrated for this purpose and their would-have-been brides and wives were taken into the seraglios. Mutilation and emasculation were common punishments meted out to men in war and peace, during the Medieval times, and beautiful young brides and women- folk were forced and absorbed into the harems of the high born and elite class. Also 'silver- bodied damsels with musky tresses' were bought in the slave-markets of India and other foreign lands. This helped in filling the harem with an exotic assortment of beauties form different countries and nationalities; but Indian women were predominantly large in numbers. They were renowned for their femininity, their beautiful tresses, their delicacy and grace. Many a poet in medieval India from Amir Khusrau's time, have waxed eloquent and extolled their beauty and charming manners. So too, have the Europeans and foreigners sung the praises of the beauty of Indian women. Orme, along with others affirms that ; "Nature seems to have showered beauty on the fairer sex throughout Industan with a more lavish hand than in most other countries"[58] Their faith devotion and faithfulness was equal to their beauty and charm.[59] In the seraglios, "these amenable creatures were an asset and were welcome in ever larger numbers. In the Mughal harem was only ingress, no egress. The harem of Akbar and his successors, thus became indeed, very large."

Henry Blochmann lists the names of only seven of the wives of Akbar [60] The cause being that the works of most of the queens and princesses in politics and society, and harem very minimal. Royal women who were intelligent played some important apart, alone, find a mention at the hands of the historians. The first wife of Akbar (zan-i-kalan) was Sultana Ruqayya Begum, Mirza Hindal's daughter. She was childless but looked after her grandson Shahjahan.[61] Mehr-un-nisa, the widow of Sher Afkun, lived with her after the demise of her husband and prior to Jahangir married her. At the age of 84, Rugayya Begum expired on 19th January 1626.[62] Sultan Salima Begum was another queen who was Bairam Khan's widow to whom Akbar got married also. She was the grand daughter of Babur[63] and the daughter of Gulrukh Begum. She was a great poetess and composed under the pen name of Makhfi. "Jahangir praises her both for her natural qualities and her acquirements. She creates an impression of herself as a charming and cultivated woman."[64] Harkha the daughter of Bhar Mal, the Raja of Amber, was married to Akbar, in February 1562.[65] She was Jahangir's mother and was conferred with the 1 title of Mariyam-uz-Zamani. The sweet good looking wife of Abdul Wasi, whose name is not mentioned, was also married to Akbar, when she was divorced from Wasi at the command of the Emperor.[66] Akbar also married the daughters of Abdulla Khan Mughal (1564) and Miran Mubarak Shah (1565). Bibi Daulat Shad, was another wife. Blochmann's statements is incomplete as. He did not state many other wives like a daughter of Kanhan, and the brother of Rai Kalyan Mal of Bikaner[67] a daughter of Har Rai of

Jaisalmer[68] and a sister of Rana Udai Singh of Marwar[69] the princesses of Merta[70] and Dungarpur[71] and many others. Indeed, Akbar's harem was very big, and he had several wives, which was placed at seven and even ten.

Blochman states twenty wives or so of Jahangir.[72] Xavier also cites that in 1597, Prince Salim had twenty lawful wives[73] But it is very certain that there were many more. Blochmann's statement about the wives of Jahangir is as follows :

1. The daughter of Raja Bhagwan Das, named Man Bai, was the first wife of Jahangir. She was married to him in 1585 and became the mother of Prince Khusrau and was given the title of Shah Begum. She was highly strung and emotional, sentimental, and when Khusrau rebelled against his father Jahangir, she lost her control and committed suicide.[74]

2. Prince Salim, when he was 17 years old in 1586[75] married the daughter of Ray Rai Singh of Bikaner and grand - daughter of Ray Kalyan Mal. Her Rajput name is not known.

3. In June, Jagat Gosain, Jodh Bai, Nam Bhai or Mira Bai,[76] daughter of Mota Raja Udai Singh and grand daughter of Raja Maldeva of Marwar, got married to Jahangir. Jodh Bai was famous for her intelligence, good nature, coolness and honour. She died during Jahangir's life time, who conferred on her the title of Bilquis Makani after her death. She gave birth to Shahjahan.[77] Amal-i- Saleh makes a statement that the child was taken care of by Ruqayya Begum, the first childless wife of Akbar, who looked after him in his child hood.

4. Another of wife of Jahangir was Karamsi, the daughter of Keshav Das Rathor.[78]

5. The beautiful daughter of Khwaja Hasan, cousin or Zain Khan Koka, was Sahib -i- Jamal. Zain Khan was the son of Picha Jan Anaga, one of the wet nurses of Akbar.[79]

6. and 7. The mothers of the princes Jahandar and Shahryar were also married to Jahangir.

8. Kanwal Rani, the daughter of Ali Rai, the ruler of Baltistan or little Tibet.[80]

9. and 10. the other two , were a daughter of Jagat Singh, eldest son of Raja Man singh, and a daughter of Rawal Bhim, brother of Ray Kalyan Mal of Jaisalmer. Their names are unknown, but Jahangir conferred the latter with the title of Malika-I-Jahan.[81]

11-18. Jahangir's consorts were Nuz-un-nisa Begum , sister of Muzaffar Hussain; Saliha Banu, daughter of Qasim Khan; the daughter of Mubarak Chak of Kashmir; the daughter of Hussain Chak of Kashmir; a daughter of the king of Khandesh. The others were the daughter of Khwaja Jahan Kabuli; a daughter of Mirza Sanjar, son of Khizr Khan Hazara and the mother of Daulat Nisa :

19-20. Jahangir married the daughter of Ram Chandra Bundela in 1609.[82] and in 1611, Jahangir married Nur Jahan, earlier known as Mehr-un-nisa, the daughter of Ghiyas Beg, a Persian at the Mughal Court.

THE HAREM OF SHAH JAHAN AND HIS QUEENS :

Like other early Mughal kings Emperor Shahjahan also had quite a large harem with many beautiful women living within it. To mention some important queens of Emperor Jahan. He had married the daughter of Mirza Muzaffar Hussain Safawi, the daughter of Nur Jahan's brother Asaf Khan. He had also wedded the daughter of Shahnawaz Khan. One very important point, we are to be aware of is, that though Shahjahan had married many women, his one and only greatest love was his beloved Arjumand Banu Begum, who was later known as Mumtaz Mahal - the Lady of the Taj. He loved her so much that after her untimely death he took up drinking alcohol to excess, to drown in his sorrows and to forget the tragedy of her death. The loss of his beloved Mumtaz Mahal was unbearable, yet he continued with his life. But one thing we can be sure of that, though later he was attracted to many women the void left by Mumtaz Mahal could be filled by none.

R.N. Saletore mentions in his book SEX IN INDIAN HAREM LIFE that once Shahjahan fell in love with a dancing girl who turned out to be of low caste. The besotted Shahjahan decided that he must have her at any cost and brought her into his harem. There were many objections from his noblemen, who opposed the very idea of a low caste woman being unfit to be kept in the harem. Sahjahan was amused at their concern. He was supposed to have cracked this on in jest and said : "Sweetmeats are good whatever shops they may have come from ". From this statement we can draw the conclusion that the Mughal rulers did not pay much attention to caste, creed nationality,

religion or language. They saw or liked any beautiful woman whether she was a dancing-girl, slave girl or a female musician, she was brought to the royal harem.

THE HAREM OF AURANGZEB:

Aurangzeb has four wives. Dilras Banu Begam was his chief and main queen. His other queens were Aurangabadi Mahal, Nawab Bai and Udipuri Mahal were inferior wives.

THE STATUS OF SECONDARY OR INFERIOR WIVES :

The secondary wives were the daughters or relatives of Indian princes who were defeated in war, political or personal ambition, married their daughters and sisters to the Mughal rulers or princes. Such women were called by Annette Beveridge as ' inferior wives' [83] Jadunath Sarkar calls them 'secondary wives'[84] under this category are not included queens like Sultan Ruqayya Begum, Sultan Salima Begum, Nur Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal.

The practice of conquest and then the practice of making matrimonial alliances after a victory was started by Emperor Akbar and was continued by his descendants and princesses from Kashmir to Golkonda and from Rajasthan to Assam[85] was procured for the harem of the Mughals. All Muslim Kings and Sultans married Indian women but during the time of Akbar it became a rather refined tradition of political design. Observes Abul Fazl , "His Majesty forms matrimonial alliances with princesses of Hindustan and of other countries; and secures by these ties of harmony, the peace of the world"[86] The first marriage of this sort, probably was conducted when

Raja Bihari Mal of Amber pledged his loyalty to Akbar and a few years later bonded it strongly by a blood relation by marrying off his daughter Harkha to the emperor. But these marriages with Indian princesses and how they took place, gave them an inferior status vis-à-vis women like Hamida Banu Begum or Mumtaz Mahal.

The 'Akbar Nama' describes the marriage of Bhihari Mal's daughter in this way : " The Rajah .... considered that (he should) make himself one of the distinguished ones at the court... In order to affect this purpose he thought of a special alliance (and to) introduce his eldest daughter.... among the attendants on the glorious pavilion (emphasis added) ... Raja Bihari Mal... brought his fortunate daughter to this station (Sambhar) and placed her among the women of the harem."[87] In the same manner "Rani Kalyan Mal Rai of Bikaner..... represented through those who had access to His Majesty that his wish was that his brother Kahan's daughter might be included among the inmates of His Majesty's harem. The Khedive accepted his proposal."[88] Again, "Rawal Har Rai, the ruler of Jaisalmer... was desirous that his daughter... might be exalted by being included among his (Majesty's) female servants.... and that holy and happy starred lady obtained eternal glory by entering the female apartments."[89] "Miran Mubarak Shah, the ruler of Khandish, represented through His Majesty's (Akbar's) intimates, that his great wish was that his daughter ;might be included among the ladies of His Majesty's seraglio... Miran's request was acceded and he despatched his chaste daughter in proper form."[90] Jahangir, in his Memoirs is still more frank and candid, even to the point of appearing blunt. After the

third year of his ascension to the throne, he writes thus, "I demanded in marriage the daughter of Jagat Singh, eldest son of Raja Man Singh."[91] Raja Ram Chandra Bundela was defeated, captured and imprisoned and the he was set free by Jahangir.[92] Later "at the request of her father I took the daughter of Ram Chandra Bundela into my service (i.e. married her)."[93] Secondary wives were always mentioned as being taken into service, or included among the female servants or obtaining glory and honour by stepping into the harem of the Mughals.

Such derogatory remarks were never used when describing the marriage of Ruqayya Begum, Salima Begum, Nur Jahan or Mumtaz Mahal. The secondary wives were always conscious of their lowly or inferior status. Some young maidens and damsels did try to extricate themselves from such forced alliances. For example, the princess of Bijapur, did not like the idea of her marriage to Prince Daniyal and while she was being taken to Ahmednagar for the wedding, she fled with her friends during a storm. But she and her friends were taken captives and brought back and then the marriage was performed.[94] The Rajput princesses were however, better off than most of the others placed in this category. Many of them rose in favor and position and conferred with titles like Mariyam-uz-Zamani and Shah Begum and Malika -i- Jahan. Most importantly, the Rajput princesses entry into the harem of the Mughals, "symbolized the dawn of a new era in Indian politics; it gave the country a line of remarkable sovereigns; it secured to four generations of Mughal emperors the services of some of the greatest captains and diplomats that medieval India

produced"[95] Moreover, the Rajput princesses presence in the Mughal seraglio had far-reaching cultural and social results and consequences.

THE CONCUBINES OR COURTESANS' POSITION IN THE HAREM OF THE MUGHALS :

The origin of concubinage is not far to search. " Slaves in early Islam were recruited from prisoners of war, including women and children.... And by purchasing and raiding.... Between the master and the female slave concubinage was permissible, but not legal marriage. The children of such a union belonged to the master and were therefore free; but the status of the concubine was thereby raised only to that of 'mother of children.'"[96] This custom continued and Akbar was aware of the difference between his 'free born' wives and slaves.[97] The concubines of the Mughals were procured by various means and ways. They, were known as 'Khaniz, Sarar and Paristar'. Emperors and noblemen spoke about their concubines in a free manner, without any restraints or inhibitions, A concubine, in fact, was sometimes, more important than a wife, for while the wife was only a wife, the concubine enjoyed the love of the man.[98] Among the Mughal royalty as well as nobility, concubinage was very much in common and widely prevalent.[99]

Two very famous concubines Babar's were Gulnar Aghacha and Nargul Aghacha[100] they " became recognized women of the royal household. They are mentioned several times by Gulbadan as taking an active part in family occasions and other festivities under Humayun..."[101] Abul Fazl quotes that Gulnar had gone for Haj or

religious pilgrimage with Gulbadan in 1575. Then there was a beautiful qad concubine or woman in-waiting of Babur.[102] Humayun too, had a fair share of concubines.[103] Some of Humayun's concubines later on became the wet nurses for the young Akbar, (for example, we can mention Bhawal Anaga.) But Akbar had many more conclubines. Bibi Salima,[104] was Shahzada Khanum's mother. "Three months after my birth" writes Jahangir without even the slightest hesitation, my sister Shahzada Khanum was born to one of the royal concubines (Kanizan) ; they gave her over to his (Akbar's) mother, Mariam Makani",[105] princes Murad and Daniyal's mothers were concubines, while Bibi Daulat, the concubine, was the mother of Princess Shakr-un nisa Begum.[106] Shakr-un-nisa Begum was present during Jahangir's rule and went on to play a prominent role in the harem of the Mughals. Aram Banu Begum, was another daughter of Akbar, who was born to a concubine.[107] She died a spinster. Jahangir, too, who had besides his wives, a large number of concubines.[108] Jahandar and Shahryar, the two sons of Jahangir were born of concubines in 1605, within the space of one month.[109]

Shahjahan's concubines too find a mention by Waris; the names of two prominent concubines are featured- Akbarabadi Mahal and Fatehpuri Mahall[110] The concubine- wife of Aurangzeb was called Aurangabadi Mahall because she was brought to the harem of the prince from the city of Aurangabad. Jadunath Sarkar, a historian, citing the Padshah Nama of Waris, says that Emperor Akbar made it compulsory that the concubines of the Mughal Emperors should be given the names of their-birth place, or after the towns from which

they were inducted into the seraglio. So therefore, we have harem women having such names as Udaipuri, Zainabadi[111] Aurangabadi, Fatepuri, Akbarabadi etc.[112]

There was always a vast difference between a wife and a concubine. While the wife, whether she was a primary wife or even a secondary wife was expected to be ever loyal and faithful to her lord and master her husband, it was not so of the concubines. There is the instance of the legendary Rupmati who would rather kill herself rather than be married to a successor of her paramour lord Baz Bahadur.[113]

Akbarabadi Mahall and Fatehpuri Mahall followed Shahjahan into captivity at Agra Fort, and they were at his bed side when he breathed his last in January 1666. Originally a dancing-girl before she became the favourite concubine of Prince Dara, Rana-i-dil was so devoted to Prince Dara that, after he was executed, Aurangzeb wished to own her, but she refused him outright[114] it was really worse when Aurangzeb was able to capture and imprison Prince Murad with the help and co-operation of one of his own concubines.[115]

Despite all these virtues and shortcomings the concubines had an attractive charm all their own and had therefore carved a special nook in the heart of their lords and masters. Shahjahan erected the renowned Fatepuri Mosque at Delhi, in memory of his great affection for his concubine Fatepuri Mahall. Even the otherwise puritanical Aurangzeb was very fond and indulgent to Udaipuri Mahall, the Georgian slave-girl of Prince Dara Shukoh, who, on the defeat and death of her first master had gone over to his victorious rival, and

later became the mother of Kam Baksh. Even though she was drunk most of the time she was able to retain all her youthful charms and influence over Aurangzeb till his death. She was the darling of his old age. Hirabai, who was also called as Zainabadi, on the other hand was ' the darling of Aurangzeb's youth'[116] These are but a few instances. The Mughal royalty and nobility kept hundreds of concubines and bestowed them with charming names which was indicative of the qualities and virtues that they possessed. A few of the concubines of the Mughal Harem in the seventeenth century had been bestowed with names such as Badam Chasm, Nazuk Badan, Sukh Dain, Kutuhal, Singaar, Piyar, Mahaan etc.[117]

THE ROLE OF, AND STATUS OF THE KANCHANIS AND BANDIS :

The female who lived and served in the seraglio were, divided into two sections like the servants and the entertainers. The entertainers consisted of dancing girls and their teams of musicians and orchestra. Akbar named them Kanchanis.[118] Earlier, Babur was greatly touched by the different way of performance of the dancing girls of Ibrahim Lodi's Seraglio, that he presented one dancer to each one of his important Begums. Thereafter, many royal Mughal ladies began to wish to have their own Team of dancing girls for their own amusement.

Other than dancing and singing no other Job was done by these classes of dancing girls.[119] Many of them lived within the four walls of the harem. Among these entertainers were also the 'Bahu Rupias' who

dressed in different fancy dresses; and the 'Bazigars' and the 'Nats' who amused and regaled audiences with acrobatics and mimicry. However, the most Famous were the Kanchanis. Manucci has given the list of names of some of the supervisors of these artistes' names which generally ended with Bai, like Sunder Bai, Mrignain Bai, Ras Bai, Hira Bai, Gul-ru Bai, kasturi Bai, Kesar Bai, Khushal Bai, Apsara Bai, Murad Bai, Chanchal Bai, Nain -jot Bai etc.[120]

The slave-girls or the Bandis, were last on the list. They were also known as 'Khawas or paristar'. In the hierarchy of the harem of the elite, maid servants and slave-girls were hardly noticed. Their duty was only to serve, to sweat at their labour and toil and sometimes provide sex, if it was needed. "Two facts may be remembered in this connection. Firstly, women had no rights in those early days. Secondly, the absence of scientific inventions necessitated them manual labour of (a large number of) human hands in providing for the comforts of the rich, and women were preferred as companion and friends"[121] These domestics were almost exposed to the wanton behaviour of masters and mistresses, who, however, treated them well. Some of these maids belonged to good families and were quite refined.[122]

For the conquering and ruling Mughal there was no lack for such women. A dozen or more servants were given to every lady who was important. Some princesses possessed as many as a hundred.[123] Needless, to say, they were all beautiful and dressed beautifully and

elegantly too. They possessed attractive names as their appearance. In the seventeenth century, some of the slave -girls had names like Gulab, Chameli, Nargis, Kesar, Kasturi, Gul-i-Badam, Sosan, Yasmin, Champa Rana-i- Gul, Gul andam, Gul-anar Saloni, Madhumati, Sugandhara, Koel, Gul rang, Mehndi, Dil Afroz Ketki, Moti, Mrig Nain, Kamal Nain, Basanti, Hira, Kishmish, Pista.[124] Such attractive girls with such beautiful names succeeded to attract the lustful attention of their masters or provide them with entertainment.

Foot Notes:

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2. Gulbadan Begum, *Humayun Nama*, Delhi, 1972, pp.8-9.
3. Ibid.
4. K. S. Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, Delhi, 1988, p.20.
5. Ibid., p.20.
6. Mrs. A. S. Beveridge, *Babar Nama*, London, 1922, pp.633-34.
7. K. S. Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, Delhi, 1988, p.21.
8. Ibid., p.21.
9. Ibid., p.21.
10. Ibid., p.21.
11. Ibid., p.21.
12. Ibid., p.21.
13. Ibid., p.21.
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16. Gulbadan Begam and Annette. S. Beveridge, *Humayun Nama and The History of Humayun Nama*, Delhi, 1972, p.20.
17. K. S. Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, Delhi, 1988, p.22.
18. Gulbadan Begam, *Humayun Nama*, Delhi, 1972, pp.97-98.
19. Ibid., pp.264-65.
20. K. S. Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, Delhi, 1988, p.22.
21. Gulbadan Begam, *Humayun Nama*, Delhi, 1972, p.104.
22. Ibid., pp.48-49.

23. Ibid., pp.218-220.

24. Ibid., pp.225-226.

25. Ibid., p.225, and pp.256-58.

26. K. S. Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, Delhi, 1988, p.23.

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28. A. S. Beveridge and Gulbadan Begum, *Babar Nama and Humayun Nama*, London and Delhi, 1922, 1972, pp.35-36, 120, p.209.

29. K. S. Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, Delhi, 1988, p.23.

30. Ibid., p.23.

31. Gulbadan Begam, *Humayun Nama*, Delhi, 1972, p.250.

32. Ibid., p.230.

33. K. S. Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, Delhi, 1988, p.23.

34. K. S. Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, Delhi, 1988, p.23.

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37. Smith. V. A., *Akbar The Great Mughal*, Oxford, 191, p.89.

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44. Hawkins, *Early Travels in India*, London, 1921, p.118.

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47. Ibid., p.24.

48. Ibid., p.24.

49. K. S. Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, Delhi, 1988, p.24.

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51. Ibid., p.24.

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62. Gulbadan Begum, *Humayun Name*, Delhi, 1972, pp.274-75.

63. K. S. Lal, *The Mughal Harem*, Delhi, 1988, p.26.

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72. Ibid., p.27.

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102. Ibid., p.30.

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115. K. S. Lal, *The Mughal Harem,* Delhi, 1988, p.30.

116. K. S. Lal, *The Mughal Harem,* Delhi, 1988, p.31.

117. Manucci Niccolao, *Storia do Mogor* Vol. II. London, 1906, p.334.

118. K. S. Lal, *The Mughal Harem,* Delhi, 1988, p.31.

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120. Manucci Niccolao, *Storia do mogor* Vol. II. London, 1906, p.335-36.

121. K. S. Lal, *The Mughal Harem,* Delhi, 1988, p.31.

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Chapter - 5

WOMEN'S ROLE IN POLITICS

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The Turk and Mongol women had substantial amount of political rights but to what extent cannot be surmised correctly because of lack of proper information. Even widow had much importance after the death of her husband. After his death, she became the guardian of her children, and in fact, head of the family. If her husband was a leader of a tribe, for example, it was but natural for her to become the head of the tribe. This position she enjoyed until her children came to majority. Women many times, acted as regents.[1]

In the tribe of Timurides, women went to the war-fields with their husbands. The great Emperor Chingiz Khan's wives also did like wise.[2] They were there mainly to care for their lords Many times, they fought/side by side also in the wars.

In the army of Timur, there were many women who freely mixed with men and bravely fought with spear, sword and arrows.[3]

The Turks in India had adopted the Persian political traditions, because of this they accepted the right of women to ascend the throne. One of the earliest example was that of Razia who ascended the throne. This example encouraged other royal women to actively take part in politics. This was in existence during the Turkish Rule in India. The Afghans also allowed their women to take part in politics.

Babur also had given a good amount of political rights to his women. But sovereignty rights had not been given to them.[4] Once Sha

Begam of Badhshan had written to Babur saying that as a woman she could not attain sovereignty, whereas her grand son could have it.[4] In 1494 AD, Babur was just eleven years old, Umar Shaikh Mirza died At that time, two powerful armies revolted in Farghana. At that critical moment, Babur's grand mother, Eshan Daulat Begam helped him to a great extent. She virtually ruled as the head of the kingdom and saw to it that Babur did not really come into trouble on any count.[5]

After some six months, one of the officers named Hassan, revolted and tried to dethrone Babur. Without losing heart, Eshan Begam organized her army and crushed the revolt. [6] She was a wise and able woman and greatly helped Babur to run the state . About his grand mother, Babur writes, "Few amongst women will have been my grand-mother's equal for judgement and counsel. She was wise and far-sighted, and many affairs of mine were carried under her advice."[7]

Ehsan was not the only woman who worked quite actively in politics. Babur's mother and wives were also Quite active. His mother, qutluz Nigar accompanied him in wars. About her, Babur writes, " She was with me in most of my expeditions and throneless time. Few of her sex excelled her in sense and sagacity".[8] His (Babur's) Shia wife Mahim Begam also helped him enormously. She had been married to Babur in 1506 AD. In all matters, she always stood by him[9] enjoyed an excellent position. In fact, she was the only queen who had been allowed to sit by the side of the king on the throne at Delhi.[10] Even after the death of her husband, she took interest in the administration, for a period of more than 2 ½ years.

Nizamuddin Khalifa, wanted to put Mahdi Kwaja on the throne (after the death of Babur), ignoring the claims of Humayun. But at that time, Mahim Begam took active part and helped Humayun.[11]

Babur's other wife, Mubarika, also helped ;him politically in solving some of his problems. Babur married Bibi Mubaraka in Afghanistan in 1519 AD. Bibi Mubarika was the daughter of Malik Sulaiman Shah. He was form the Yusufzai tribe which was quite notorious for causing mischief. With her intelligence and tact, she helped Babur, to have a firm hold on Afghanistan.[12] In the reign of Humayun, the lady who occupied a high position was Khanzada Begam. She was the eldest sister of Babur. Mahim Begam, the Shia wife of Babur, passed away in 1532-33 AD. After this, Khanzada Begam, became the principal lady of the palace and was also given the title of 'Padshah Begam"[13] Humayun had great faith in her and consulted her on all important matters. The sister of Humayun named Gulbadan Begam addressed her as the 'Dearest Lady."[14] In 1541 AD Humayun advanced towards Thatta. At that time, he learnt that Hindal occupied Qandhar and Kamran had marched against him to recover it. Humayun was greatly disturbed and rquested Khanzada Begam to mediate in this matter. She went to Qandahar and despite her best efforts did not succeed.[15] In 1545 AD Humayun returned from his trip of Iran and laid siege to the fort of Qandhar. Now Kamran was in difficulty. He sent Khanzada to protect the fort. Askari was in charge of the fort. Humayun's forces pushed forward and the fall of the fort was certain.

Khanzada Begam was the principal lady of the harem and during the last twelve years of her life she took active intrest in political affairs and also in the matters of the harem. During this period, she wielded a lot of influence and power. She always tried to help Humayun to the best of her abilities.

During the reign of Humayun, Khandaza Begam was the only powerful lady. Apart from harem woman some other woman out side the harem were also coming up in wealth and influence. Haram Begam was such a women. She was wife of Humayun's cousin Sulaiman Mirza [16] and daughter of Mirwais Beg.[17] She got the title of Wali Niamet.[18] She was intelligent and dominated both her husband and son. They also consulted her on all important state matters. In this regard. Abul Fazl says, "without her (Haram Begams) concurrence, Sulaiman Mirza, could not conduct any state business, and whom he, out of a moment of weakness, had made ruler over him self."[19] As already stated, the first instance other pro-active role came into the picture in 1549 AD. On that occasion, Humayun had started on an expedition form Kabul to Balkh. He requested Haram Begam to help him. Within a short period she got an army, arranged and sent, to help him in his expeditions.[20]

In 1551 A.D. Haram Begam came to Kabul, [21] to get away from some of her domestic problems. She was an ambitious woman and an intelligent and able woman who, by her abilities, was able to manage political and financial affairs of Badakshan. But those who were not happy with her, spread the rumour that there was some unnatural intimacy between her and her brother. Haider Beg. When this came to

the notice of her son Mirza Ibrahim, he put Haider to death. With this, Haram Begam became very dejected and went to Mecca on a pilgrimage.[22] Thwn Haram Begam wanted Mirzz Sulaiman to take conquest to Kabul.[23] On death of Humayun also Halam Begum did not succeed in occupying Kabul.[24]

Ten years later in the year 1566 AD she played an interesting role in Kabul. As Kabul was not sufficiently protected at that time, she encouraged her husband to make his fourth attempt on Kabul Masum has been put in charge of the Fort of Kabul. Haram Begam made her husband attack the Fort of Kabul. At the same time, by sheer and kind words, and she requested the young prince to come to Qarabagh which was a distance of 24 miles from Kabul. Her intention was to get him arrested there. But it did not materialize.[25]

She (Hara Begum) had a strong desire to be in active politics and she took the administration of Badakhshan, which was any way under the control of her husband. She ruled it well and managed the army also very capably. She even had the power of inflicting heavy punishments those who did not toe her line. She used this power to the maximum extent.[26] She also tried her hand in the administration of Kulab. But she did not succeed there.[27] She was a gutsy and of fine character and on these, qualities won the respect of almost all around her.[28]

Apart from the women of the Royal Family, there were many other woman who were well known during the period of Humayun. One of them was Lad Malika. She was the wife of Taj Khan Sarang Khani, a nobleman of Afghan origin. He had been appointed as the

Governer of the Fort of Chunar by Sikandar Lodhi. She was a woman of great beauty, strength and talents. The co-wives were jealous of her and hatched a plan to get her killed. But that plan failed and in the fiasco, Taj Khan himself was killed. Malika enjoyed the good will of her soldiers and senior officers of her husband and with their support, she established her control over the State. As she was an exceedingly fine woman in all aspects, her sons also were loyal and supported her. Later on, Sher Shah married her. He not only won the Fort of Chunar, but also all her wealth.[29]

Another Woman of some importance in this period was Rani Karmavati. She was the wife of Rana Sanga. She had a lot of influence over her husband and taking advantage of this she was able to get jagirs on her sons Bikram and Vola. She also staked their claim for the throne of Mewar. She contacted Babur, the Mughal Emperor to request help in making her son the king of Mewar. But the Mughal Emperor did not encourage her in this regard.[30] However, in 1531 AD, her son Vikramaditya occupied the throne of Mewar. But he was incompetent and neglected his duties. His own officers and noblemen lost confidence in him and they were about to showed their dissent by killing against him. But the situation was brought under control by Rani Karmavati, who was an able and tactful administrator. At this time, Bahadur Shah of Gujarat, threatened to invade Mewar. The Rani requested Humayun to help her, but he declined to help her.[31] As a last resort, she had to purchase peace from Bahadur Shah by offering him some horses, elephants, money and territory of Malwa.[32]

The trouble ceased for some time. The political conditions began deteriorating in Mewar and using these favorable conditions, Bahadur Shah made a second attempt to attack Chittor. In 1535 AD. This time Rani Karmavati made frantic and sincere attempts to save her kingdom. She collected the nobles and assembled the army and fought valiantly. But her resistance did not last long before the superior fire-power of Bahadur Shah. She realised that she was losing the battle. As a last resort, to save her honour, she killed herself by performing 'Jauhar'. Finally, the fort was captured by Bahadur Shah on 8th March, 1535 A.D.[33] Thus Rani Karmavati became a martyer in Mewar. She was courageous woman, of great ability and character.

The earlier part of Akbar's reign was not a smooth one. There were many political turmoils, and during that period, many women played important roles. One of them was Mahchuchak Begam. She was the step mother of Akbar. She married Humayun in 1546 A.D. Humayun had appointed her son Mirza Mohammad Hakeem as Governer of Kabul in 1556 A.D. He (Mirza) was placed under the guardianship of Munim Khan, who helped him in the administration of Kabul. But, Mahchuchak Begam was highly ambitious and she began to exercise her power and influence in the administration of Kabul. In 1560AD Munim Khan was recalled. He put his son Ghani Khan in his place to help the prince. But Ghankan was not as able as his father Munim Khan. Taking advantage of the situation, Mahchudhak Begam, tightened her grip over Kabul, in even a firmer way than before. She forced Ghani Khan out from his position and even made him to go to India.[34] Now Kabul was under the direct

control of Mah Begam. She appointed Fazil Beg, to look after the administration. But Fazl Beg's rivals were jealous and angry at his position, saw to it that he was murdered. Then Sha Wali Atka was appointed general manager of Kabul, but, he assumed more powers than was given to him and began to behave in an arrogant way. Mahchuchak Begam; was upset by him and she finally saw to it that he (Sha Wali Atka) was put to death.[35]

In 1563 A.D. Ghani Khan was expelled from Kabul. The political situation in Kabul was very chaotic. When the news reached Emperor Akbar, he sent Munim Khan to establish peace and order in Kabul. Munim Khan was also interested to go there. But the Afghans put up a brave front and fought well against Munim Khan. Munim Khan was unable to pierce their resistence. He was ultimately defeated and forced to retreat.[36]

Shah Abul Maali, a noble man from the family of Sayyids of Trmiz. He had been kept in Lahore prison. He came to Kabul in search of protection and approached Mah Begam helped and scour. Mah Begam after much consultations, with her official, welcomed him, and treated him well. To strengthen even greater relationship with him, she gave her daughter (Fakkrunnisa Begam) in marriage to him.

But Shah Maali did not like to be under Mahchuchak Begam's and control, he soon started to assert himself. He wanted to become the sole master of Kabul and revolted against his mother-in-law and ultimately got her killed in 1564 A.D. [37] Mirza Sulaiman of Badakshan helped Mirza Hakim. He defeated Abul Maali and helped him (Mirzattakim) to retain his hold on Kabul.

After the death of her husband, Mah Begam took an active interest in the politics of Kabul. For the next eight years she dominated the political scene of Kabul. She tried her best to strengthen the position of her son (Mirza Hakim) and in that process, lost her life. Her activities in the initial stages of the rule of Akbar, were never to his liking. In fact, they were a nuisance to him.

Another prominent and enthusiastic woman of some importance was Maham Anaga, who was the chief nurse of Akbar.[38] She was very active in the initial years of Akbar is rule. Maham had a say in the political affairs of the country. According to Von Noer, her influence continued form 1650 to 1562 A.D. till the death of Emperor Akbar. But according to V. Smith, it remained from 1560 to 1564 A.D. From the views of the two historians, we can pressure that Maham was highly ambitious and used Akbar to fulfil her own selfish ends. It may be said that she had some influence, but it is wrong to surmise that Akbar was under her influence and obeyed her implicitly. In fact, he did not much care for women. Maham Anaga was the wife of Nadim Kuka and mother of Baqi and Adham. At one stage she was even prepared to lay down her life for the sake of Akbar. That was in 1547 A.D.[39] Since then, Akbar reposed great confidence in Maham Anaga.

Humayun died in 1556 A.D. After words, Bairam khan became the regent of Akbar. As he grew up, he (Akbar) wanted to assert himself in every way.[40] He got sick of Bairam khan.[41] When Akbar confided this to Anga, she supported Akbar[42] By this time, many of Anaga's relatives had occupied key positions both in the palace and administration. This development naturally strengthened the laws of

Anaga. Shahabaddin was the Governor of Delhi and Baqi Khan, the governor of Alighar,[43] once when Akbar went on a hunting, trip, Anaga told him to visit his sick mother, who was staying in Delhi.[44] She had some negotiations with Shahabuddin Shahabuddin welcomed Akbar in Delhi.[45] Anaga in consultation with Shahabuddin spoke something to Akbar and this changed him quite significantly. They told Akbar that Bairam Khan was selfish and greedy and as long as he was there, he would not allow him (Akbar) to run the administration[46] as per his liking Shahabuddin and Anaga told him that they would not like to be mute spectators for such erosion of power of the Emperor and as such, they would rather go on a pilgrimage. They further requested Akbar to give them permission to go on a pilgrimage.[47] Akbar greatly loved Anaga and therefore never allowed her to be separated from him. Finally, these people created a rift between Bairam Khan and the Emperor Akbar. In the end, Bairam Khan was persuaded by Akbar to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca. By this time, the Emperor had already decided to take over the administration of the country.

After Bairam khan's exit from the scene, Akbar turned his attention to Malwa. It was ruled by Baz Bahadur. As Akbar was interested in Malua, he sent Adam Khan (son of Maham Anaga) to Malwa, in order to capture it.[48] He defeated Baz Bahadur in 1561 A.D. Adam Khan carried off the wealth of Baz Bahadur, including money and women of the seraglio.[49] This success made Adam Khan arrogant. Instead of sending the booty to the Emperor, he kept the most valuable articles for himself, including the beautiful girls.[50] Akbar became very angry at this grave misconduct of Adam Khan. So to saw

for himself all this mischief, Akbar unexpectedly went to this place.[51] Anaga knew than her son would be in trouble if Akbar saw the truth. She sent some messengers to alert her son. But before they could go, Akbar had already arrived there.[52] When confronted, Adam Khan admitted his mistakes and returned almost all the booty and requested the Emperor to pardon him. Akbar half heartedly consented.[53] Though Adam Khan had returned the booty, he had kept two beautiful girls for himself.[54] When Akbar learnt about it, he became very angry and thought of inspecting the place. Anaga knew that her son would be in trouble again if the truth came out. So, before Akbar derived, she got those beautiful girls, killed for no fault of their own.[55]

Maham Anaga was wise and totally loyal to the Emperor. Because of these qualities, she began to exercise a lot of political power. The Emperor had a lot of confidence in her. [56]

Upto this time, everything went on smoothly. By now, Maham Anaga was quite conscious of her importance. She wanted to have maximum power in her own hands.[57] If that was not possible, she wished it to be at least amongst her people. Maham Anaga had enormous wisdom and courage. Akbar, naturally did not like that and, so in order to curb her influence and power, he appointed Shamshuddin Atka Khan as the Prime Minister.[58] Anaga was talented, devoted and intelligent and by virtue of these qualities, she had till now enjoyed power and prestige. In fact, she was almost like the Prime Minister. When such was her position, Akbar's choice of Atka Khan for the high post of Prime Minister was naturally not liked by Maham

Anga.[59] But Munim Khan was also not happy with the power and prestige of Maham Anga. With Akbar's choice of Atka Khan, differences arose between Maham Anaga and Akbar. This shows that Akbar was not completely under the influence of Anaga.[60] Infact, he was shrewdly using her services for his own means and ends. Within a short period of two months her influence almost ended.[61]

Pir Muhammad was transferred to Malwa and Adam Khan was recalled from there. This proved that Anaga's influence by this time, had almost Vanished. There is no evidence to show that Anaga had indulged in nepotism. It is true that Adam Khan had been given the task of conquering Malva. But, that was not a big favour. she was interested in dumping Bairam Khan and raising her son's position. But this contention was not supported by facts. Neither Bairam Khan was punished nor Adam Khan gain any favour. In due course, Adam Khan murdered Atka Khan chiefly because envy. Sheer Akbar did not take to this act kindly and was very upset. He punished Adam Khan by ordering that he be thrown down from a terrace. These instances show that Akbar was in full command and acted on his own will. After forty days of the death of her son (Adam Khan), Maham Anaga died of grief in 1562 A.D.

It is true that Akbar took advantage of the intelligence, talent and loyalty of Anaga, but he never allowed her to have a hold on him.

Outside the harem of the Mughals, a Hindu woman played a significant role. Her name was Durgavati and she was commonly referred to as Rani.[62] Her father was Raja Salbahan who ruled over Rata and Mahoba. Durgavti had been married to a man named

Dalpat. Dalpat was the son of Amar Das.[63] Dalpat died in 1548 A.D. After the death of her husband, she became the Regent of her son. (Bir Narayan) She ruled at Garha.[64] She was a very able and benevolent lady and because of her many good qualities, she became a popular ruler of her kingdom. There were 23000 villages in her possession. She appointed Resident Governors (called Siqdars) for 12000 villages. She kept other villages for herself and ruled over them directly.[65] About her, Abul Fuzl remarks, "She did great things, by dint of her fore-seeing abilities. She had great contests with Baz Bahadur and Mians and always emerged victorious."[66] She did much good for the welfare of the people. She was loved and respected by her people.[67] "She was a women of loveliness and grace."[68]

Her fine merits, proved she was a confident, courageous woman. She was not ready yield her power to Akbar. Finally, Akbar ordered his men to invade Garha.[69] Though Durgavati was surprised, she did not show any nervousness. She consulted her ministers and officers and finally decided to attack. To the warfront, she came on an elephant (named Sarman) and started fighting with only a small army.[70] Two arrows struck her, but she bravely pulled them out. She was badly wounded in the battle and was unable to continue the fight. She thought that it was better to die than to live in disgrace. In the final moments, she asked Adhar, one of her assistants to stab her.[71] But he did not agree to do so.[72] So, finally, the great 'Rani' stabbed herself and died a martyr. Her final words were, "I am overcome in battle, God forbid, that I be also overcome in name and honour." [73]

Another noble woman of this period was Bhaktunnisa Begam. She was the half sister of Akbar and had been married to Khwaja Hassan of Badakshan. Mahammad Hakim, the Governor of Kabul rebelled in Kabul. He attacked Punjab and went upto Lahore. He was checked by Mansingh, who was the Governor of that Province (Lahore). Akbar was displeased with Hakim and declared war on him. He was very frightened and fled deep into the forests to save his life.[74] The Emperor himself went to Kabul and overpowered Hakim. However he pardoned him, but did not give him any more power. He apponted his sister Bhaktunnisa Begam as the Governor of Kabul.[75] This greatly humiliated Hakeem. Akbar warned Hakeem that he would never be tolerated if he hadany mischievous plan.[76] After the departure of Akbar from Kabul, Hakim Bartially, regained his position. But he was never able to get his full powers. All important documents had to be signed by his sister Bhaktunnisa Begam.[77]

When Bhaktunnisa was put in charge of Kabul, the situation there came under control. The Emperor was not happy with the activities of Abdulla Khan and he was equally worried by the impertinence of Hakim. But after Bhaktunnesa was put in charge, things came under control because of her of the deft handling.

During the reign of Humayun. Khanzada Begam helped him in many ways, patching up differences etc. In the same way, during Akbar's time, two women helped him alot politically. They were Mariam Makani, his mother and the was Salima Sultan Begam, his wife. They helped him (Akbar) on many political matters.

In 1599 A.D. Akbar was to go to the South on an expedition. For quite sometime before this, he, (Akbar) had stopped talking to his son Salim because he had become alcoholic and never took any interest in the administration of the State. At that time it was Mariam Makani (Grand Mother of Salim) who brought about a compromise between the father and son.[78] (That is, between Akbar and Salim).

Soon after this, Salim committed another big crime. By that time, Akbar's rule over the country was well over 40 years, and the end of his reign was, however, in sight. This made Salim very impatient and he wanted to grab power by force. So, in 1601 A.D. he revolted and even assumed the royal title. This occurred at Allahabad. The situation became highly volatile and Emperor Akbar was very upset. Nobody ever dared to talk to Akbar about Salim. Finally, Mariyam Makani (Grand mother of Salim) and Gulbadan Begam (Aunt of Salim) pleaded on behalf of Salim and made Akbar to grant him pardon. He was pardoned in 1603 A.D.[79]

In the very first year of reign of Jahangir, his step-mother Salima Sultana Begam and some other Begams of the harem, played some important role in politics. In 1606, Khursru, the eldest son of Jahangir revolted against his father.[80] He was helped by Khan Azam, son of Shamsuddin Atka.[81] Khan Azam was a loose-tongued person. One night he incurred the wrath of Amir –ul-Umra Sharif Khan, the grand Wazir. In private talks, nobles suggested that Khan-Azam should be put to death. But Khan-L-Jahan Lodhi opposed the idea. Finally, the Begams intervened and and Khan Azam was pardoned.[82]

On another occasion, the rebellion of Khusru was crushed in 1613 A.D. Even on this occasion too, the mother and sisters intervened on his behalf and got him pardon from the Emperor.[83]

One of the most striking personalities of that period was the most charming Nurjahan. She was the daughter of Itimad-ud-Daula.

She married Jahangir in the year 1611 A.D. She was an extremely beautiful and lovable Woman. She was courageous and intelligent also. She looked after Emperor Jahangir with great loyalty, love and care. She was intelligent enough to understand the intricacies of politics as she had great interest in politics. She was an able administrator and advised her husband even in administrative matters. Her fine qualities made the Emperor have great confidence in her. She also had a lot of influence over him.

p.33 In 1623 A.D. Prince Khurram revolted against his father Jahangir. He instigated Jagat Singh (the son of Raja Basu) to go to the Punjab and start seditious activities. Very quickly Jagat Singh's resources were exhausted and he unable to continue his clandestine activities. So, as a last resort, he prostrated himself before NurJahan and requested her to get him a royal pardon. She intervened successfully and got him the required pardon.[84]

On the influences Nurjahan exercised in those days in politics and in administration, it seems that the opinions are divided.

She was very ambitious and wanted as much power as possible in her own hands. Therefore, she formed a small but powerful group of her own. In that group, the prominent members were, her father

Itimad-Ud-Daula, her mother Asmat Begam, her brother Asaf Khan[85] and some of her other close relatives. Asaf Khan's daughter was given in marriage to Khurram, the second son of Emperor Jahangir.[86] This took place in the year 1612 A.D. After the marriage, Khurram was also included in the group of Nurjahan. She kept her own people in many important places.[87] Naturally, these secret activities were not liked by the other nobles and other administrators. They were jealous and envious of this group.[88]

Later, the title of 'Shahajahan' was given to Khurram. After this title. New Jahan began to slowly rise in influence and power. After sometime, the prominence that Shahajahan was gaining, the relationship between him and Nurjahan began to sour Shahajahan left the group of Nurjahan.[89] The strained relationship, made Nurjahan use her influence and she planned to send him to distant Kandahar. Not only that, she saw to it that his Jagirs were also withdrawn.[90] As Shahajahan was unwilling to go, he refused to obey the command. Finally, he rebelled but his rebellion was crushed.[91] Nurjahan's growing influence and power caused enormous resentment to all concerned. It was more marked when Mahaba Khan, the 'Grand Old Man of the Establishment' rose in revolt.[92]

Even though many hold this view, it is not fully reliable. These are results of speculation, so it cannot be taken as authentic.[93]

Foreign travellers who visited the country at that time agree on the point that there was a 'Junta' of Nurjahan. There are also

references to this fact in the writings of Thomas Roe (1615), Delact, Pelsaert (1620-27). Terry (1622), Pietra Della valle (1623-24) and Peter Mundy (1628-34). Their accounts are not very reliable.[94]

Among the authors of that period, there was a Persian writer named Wali Sirhindi. He has written a book titled Tawarikh-J-Jahangir Shahi in the fourteenth year of the reign of Jahangir, and in that there is no reference to the fact that Nurjahan had wielded so much power and influence. There is another book written by Kami Shiraji named Fath-Nama-I-Nurjahan Begam. This book has been written in 1625-26 A.D. and in this also there is no reference to the group of Nurjahan. Even in Tuzuk-I-Jahangiri, there is no reference to the existence of any such 'Junta'.

Only in two books, there is mention of the influence of Nurjahan in the politics of that time. One is by Mutamid Khan, (the author of Iqbal-Nama-I-Jahangiri), in which he refers to the jealousy between Nurjahan and Khurram. But he has written this during the tome of Shajahan and therefore what he has written may not be quite reliable. Kamgar Hussain in his book by name Maasir-I-Jahangiri, written in the year 1630 A.D. also gives more or less the same opinion. The opinion of these two authors cannot be taken to be very reliable.

We can conclude that whatever influence and power that Nurjahan might have had, was mainly because of her personal relationship with the Emperor. She was beautiful, charming and obedient. She had enormous devotion to her husband.[95] Her main interest was to book after her husband and not rising up in the field of politics or power. The only instance of her pro-active role in

politics was when Mahabat Khan rebelled. She took an active part to curb it. There were rebellions in the South and in order to crush them Prince Pervez and Mahabat Khan were sent there. After the suppression of the rebellion in the year 1625 A.D. they had camped at Sarangapur. Mahabat Khan and Pervez were then transferred to Bengal.[96] They reluctantly complied with the order. Mahabat Khan was asked to give an account of the money that he had spent during his recent march towards the South. In addition to this, he was also asked to send some elephants to the Emperor.[97] He was also charged with the offence of disloyalty to the Emperor, because he had conducted the engagement of his daughter without the permission of the Emperor.[98]

Mahabat Khan was offended by this order. He thought that these orders had been issued by the cajoling of Asaf Khan. It was well known that they had deep resentment between themselves.[99] He wanted that the Emperor should come out of the clutches of Asaf Khan. With this plan in mind, he went to meet the Emperor with five thousand Rajput soldiers. At that time, Jahangir was on his way to Kabul and on the way, he camped at the bank of the River Jhelum.[100] Mahabat Khan waited for the proper time. One fine day, Emperor Jahangir's army crossed the river and the Emperor (with his limited staff) was on this side of the river. He surrounded the Emperor with his men and took him captive. The Emperor was taken to the camp of Mahabat Khan.[101]

In the hasted of this military operation, Mahabat Khan had forgotten to take Nurjahan into custody. By the time he realized his

mistake, Nurjan escaped incognito and escaped to the opposite bank.[102] She immediately called her brother and other top military people and told them to secure the release of the Emperor. They wanted to attack Mahabat Khan's army and secure Jahangir's release.[103]

When this news reached Jahangir, he did not approves because he thought that the royal army (that is, his army) was weak and therefore could not defeat Mahabat's army.[104] He sent letters to Nurjahan telling her not to attack Mahabat's army. He also royal sent his seal with the letter to show her that the letter was written by him. But the royal army ignored the letter. They decided to attack Mahabat Khan. Fidai Khan of the royal army made an attempt that night, but the attempt failed.[105]

Finally Nurjahan decided to lead the royal army herself. She sat on an elephant with the daughter of Shariyar.[106] The royal force started to cross the river. But the place they had chosen proved un favourable. The water was deep and the current was swift but Nurjahan persisted and encouraged them and saw to it that they did cross the river.[107] The message sent by Nurjahan through a enunch, named Nadim, was: "The Begam wants to know if this is the time for delay and irresolution, strike boldly forward so that by your advance the enemy may be repulsed and take to flight." Finally, they crossed the river and the battle began.[108]

During the battle, her (Nurjahan's) grand daughter was hit in the arm by an arrow. Her elephant was badly wounded. It returned, swam the river and safely brought Nurjahan to the shore.[109] Nurjahan

attended the wounds of her grand-daughter. Fidai Khan boldly continued but failed yet again.[110] The royal force could not succeed in its attempt. Now Asaf Khan's position weakened. By this act of declaring war, he had incurred the wrath of Mahabat Khan. But if he now went back, Nurjahan would not take to him kindly. Was afraid and he ran away to his 'jagir' at Attock.[111] Fidai Khan, ran away to his son's place at Rohatas. Others joined Mahabat Khan and fled too.[112]

Nurjahan felt miserable at the separation from her husband. (Jahangir). She had failed to release Jahangir by force. So, she decided to surrender to Mahabat Khan and join her husband in captivity.[113] Now Mahabat Khan almost had a total victory in his grasp. Obviously, the captivity was very humiliating for Nurjahan and for a woman of her status, it was unbearable. She laid out a plan.[114] It had two parts: the first part was to be played by Jahangir and the second part was to be played by herself.[115] She wanted to win over the nobles to her side. So, she "Cajoled the unwilling, bearded the greedy, strengthened the wavering", and gave promises to almost all. She enlisted the support of many commoners also. In this way, she organized a great conspiracy.[116]

Nurjahan thus formed a fairly big force. She instructed her eunuch, (eunuch's name Hushiyar Khan) to gather some 2000 men and proceed towards the Imperial Court.[117] Jahangir was satisfied with the build up of the force and informed Mahabat Khan about it. Khan was afraid and ran away.[118] He took with him Asaf Khan, his son Abu Talib, and also son of Daniyal. The royal army wanted to capture him. But they could not.[119]

After having been freed from the clutches of Mahabat Khan, Emperor Jahangir went to Rohtas and conducted a Durbar there.[120] The most important matters discussed at the Durbar was how to cut Mahabat Khan to size and how to get some of the noblemen freed from the captivity of Mahabat Khan. Nurjahan sent an Imperial order to Mahabat Khan to release the captives. Mahabat Khan released the son of Daniyal but he did not release Asaf Khan. He said that he would release him only after he was given safe passage to Lahore. Nurjahan threatened him with dire consequences. He relented and released him. (Asaf Khan). But, he had kept Asaf khan's son as hostage and released him later.[121]

Now the Imperial camp arrived in Lahore and Asif khan was appointed as the Vakil.[122] Mahabat Khan had now joined hands with Shajahan and Nurjahan was worried. She sent her commander-in-chief Khan Jahan to put them dowm.[123] By about this time, Jahangir's health began deteriorating rapidly, and he passed away in October 1627 A.D. near Rajori when he was returning from Kashmir to Lahore.

Soon after the death of Emperor Jahangir, Nurjahan called a meeting of nobles and important people. Asaf Khan was naturally much interested in his son-in-law and he sensed some foul play in the meeting, and prevented it just in time.[124] Nurjahan was kept almost in confinement. At that time, Shahjahan was in the South and he (Asaf Khan) inmmediately sent for him. As a temporary measure, Dawar Bhaksh, the son of Khusru was proclaimed the Emperor.[125] But Nurjahan's intention was to make Shahriyar the Emperor. Though she was kept uner house arrest, she managed to send information to

Shahriyar.[126] Shahriyar with his men, proclaimed himself the Emperor in Lahore. Asaf Khan and Dawar Bhaksh reached Lahore and defeated Shariyar, imprisoned him and blinded him.[127] Shahjahan was then proclaimed the Emperor of Delhi in 1627 A.D.[128]

After Shahjahan became the Emperor, Nurjahan lost interest and retired from politics, Shahjahan gave her an annual pension of two lakhs of rupees and Nurjahan accepted it. From then on she wore only white clothes and abstained from pleasure parties.[129] Nurjahan's retirement from politics was not only surprising but also quite significant. After all, she was quite close to the affairs of the State and she was intelligent too If she had wanted, she could have had a say in the important matters of the country. She had proved her ability and intelligence in the governance of the State. But inspite of all this she did not want be included in politics. This shows her devotion towards her husband, Emperor Jahangir. After his death, she wanted to live like an ordinary and devoted widow.

During the early years of the reign of Shahjahan, his wife Mumtaz Mahal was held a key role and exercised great influence in administration and political matters of the state. She was devoted and loving wife who always stood by Shahjahan in both his difficulties, and also in his prosperity. She had cheerfully followed him in his wanderings.[130]

When Shahjahan ascended the throne in 1628A.D. his wife Mumtaz Mahal occupied a premier position in all matters regarding the palace and the state.[131] She had been given the Royal Seal also. After the formation of all documents, they were sent to the Imperial

harem where the official seals were to be affixed.[132] This enabled her to have a grasp of all important matters and she took active interest in some matters in which she was interested.

In 1627-28, (A.D) Shahajahan was to come to Delhi from South India to occupy the throne. He had heard that the Governor of Gujarat, Saif Khan, was not quite loyal. He ordered that he should be brought to the court. As he was the son-in-law of Mumtaz Mahal, she was interested in his safety. So she sent Parastar Khan to Ahmadabad and ordered him to see that no harm was done to Saif Khan. On the recommendation of Mumtaz Mahal, the Emperor reduced the severity of punishment that had been givent to Saif khan.[133]

At about this time, the Portuguese were in Hugli.[134] Once they kidnapped two slave girls of Mumtaz-Mahal.[135] She was very angry and she was chiefly responsible in seeing that the hold of the Portuguese on Hugli has diminished. In fact she wanted to punish them quite severely. But she could not fulfil her wish because of her early death.[136] Shah Kahan was also angry with the Poirtuguse because Mumtaz Mahal was angry with them.

Mumtaz Mahal died at a young age in the year 1631 A.D. After her death, the main responsibility of looking after the harem fell on Jahanara, the eldest daughter of Shahajan. She was interested in politics and took an active part also in it. As she was pretty and the favourite daughter of Shahj Khan, she could have had anything that she wished for.[137] She was the most respected lwoman of the palace and harem.[138] She had unlimited power in the court of Shahajan.[139] If any one, wanted to have an audience with the Emperor, they had to

first win the favour and grace of Jahanara Begam. She was also given valuable presents and gifts from the favour seekers.[140]

Several times, many differences and quarrels in the palace and harem were set right by Jahanara Begam. If they were not set right, they had some political effects too.[141]

In 1644, Aurangzeb was foolish and incurred the anger of the Emperor. Shahjahan became very angry and confiscated his Jagir and rank.[142] At that time, Jahanara intervened and saw to it that the original positions of Aurangazeb were restored to him.[143] Raja Prithvichand was the king of Srinagar. Shahjahan attacked him in 1654 A.D. Raja Soubhagya Prakash helped Shahjahan in this attack. The war continued for two years and Raja Prithvichanad tired of the war and he ultimately made peace with the Emperor through the mediatory efforts of Jahanara.[144]

In 1656, A.D. Aurangzed was the Governor Viceroy of the Deccan region. At that time, Golkonda was ruled by one Abdulla Qutb Shah. Aurangzeb was angry with Qutb Shah because he had not paid the Emperor 'Tribute Money' and also for imprisoning the family of Wazir Mir Jumla.[145] Wazir was Aurangazeb's man. These two mistakes on the part of Qutb Shah, made Aurangzeb invade Golkonda. In fact, he urged Shahahan to annexe the kingdom of Golkonda.[146] He firmly told the Emperor that it should be annexed. Qutb Shah requested Jahanara to help him. She did help him and his original position was restored.[147]

The war of succession started among the sons of Shahahan in 1658 (A.D.) Jahanara Begam was in favour of Dara becoming the

next Emperor. She even prayed for him.[148] Jahanara requested her brothers not to fight for the throne and bring a bad name to the Emperor. In his ambition to occupy the throne, Aurangzeb waged war, crossed Chambal and reached a spot near Samugarh. Dara could not hold on to Chambal and Aurangzeb after crossing Chambal, reached Bhadrur, which is 40 miles away from Dholpur. The battle of Samugarh was about to start. On 23rd May 1658 A.D., Jahanara wrote to Aurangzed to stop the war and obey his father.[149] In fact, Jahanara wanted to marry Dara. But Bernier says that permission was not given on the ground that her husband would become very powerful. But this view is not supported by any reliable authority. It was true that she was in favour of Dara becoming the next Emperor. She advised him about taking too much of a risk and pulling the Empire to danger.[150] Her advice did not have any effect on him.

The Samughar Battle between Dara and Aurangzeb was fought on 29th May 1658 A.D., Dara was defeated. After the defeat, Dara came bacl to Agra. Both Shahajahan and Jahanara were. Soon after, Dara fled to Delhi. Some time later Aurangzeb came to Agra. That was in June 1658 A.D. with the help of his men, he took control of Agra fort and laid siege to the fort. Shahjahan was in the fort. Emperor Shahjahan appealed to his son to lift the siege. But he was adamant. He wanted his father to come out of the fort and surrender the fort completely. On 8th June 1658, Shahajahan surrendered. Soon after, he was imprisoned by Aurangzeb.[151] On 10th June 1658 A.D., Jahanara visited Aurangzeb to effect a compromise. She even proposed the portion of the empire. Her proposal to Aurangzeb this:

Punjab and adjoining territories should go to Dara, Gujarat to Murad, Bengal to Shuja. She further added that the Decan should have Sultan Mohammad in charge, and the rest of the empire should go to him (i.e. Aurangazeb). He should also be have the title of 'Iqbal-Buland.'[152] Jahanara also wanted Aurangazeb to meet Emperor Shahajahan. But Aurangzeb did not agree to these proposals. Jahanara very sad and dejected.[153] She felt that Aurangzeb was unreasonable and cruel. She wanted to be at the side of her father, even if it meant imprisonment with her father. She did not want a luxurious life style which would have come to her lot, if she had sided with her brother. She was resigued to her sad fate, stayed with her father and served him till the last day of his life. It is reported that as soon Shahajahan passed away.[154] Aurangazeb offered her succour through a letter. She thanked him for the letter. However Sarkar doubts this.

There are many letters written to Jahanara regarding various matters. Such as appointments, settlement of disputes etc. A number of such letters are collected in Ruqqut-i-Alamgiri and Adab-i-Alangiri.

In one of the letters Aurangzeb recommended the case of Murtaza Quli Khan, the son of Hisamuddin to Jahanara for appointment.

The fort of Asirgarh had been taken away from Aurangzen and it has been given to Murad. Aurangzeb requested Jahanara to see that it was given back to him.

Jahanara wrote a letter to Aurangzeb regarding the appointment of Mir Nasir in place of Multafit Khan.

In another letter, Jahanara wanted Mohammad Nakki to open a 'Karkhana' (factory) in Burhanapur or Machalipatna.

In another letter, Jahanara had written to Aurangzeb regarding the claims of Atish Khan. Aurangzeb replied that whatever she desired would be givern.[155]

The letters showed the importance of Jahanara in getting things done.

Native rulers and chiefs had many problems and on several occasions, they approached Jahanara to get their problems solved. Raja Baddha Prakash of Sirmur has some dispute with Raja of Gharwal. Buddha Prakash, gave some costly presents to Jahanara and requested her to see that his problems were solved.[156] He also requrested her to send orders for the imprisonment of Zamindars and Tahsildars of Sondha for their misconduct. When some people brought serious matters which were beyond her preview, she advised them to go to the Emperor directly.[157]

Foreign traders were also aware of Jahanara's power and influence. When the Dutch traders wanted permission for their trade, they went through Jahanara in order to get their work done.[158] The revenue of Surat formed part of her personal earnings. The Dutch traders requested the exemption of duties; it was rejected. But it was agreed that in future they should make a fixed payment of rupees fifty five thousand annually. A 'Farman' was given granting freedom from 'way-dues' in Bengal. Another 'Farman' was issued permittitng them the repair of boats at Surat.[159]

As Jahanara's prestige and influence increased, even foreigners went straight to her to get their work done.[160] But it is not clearly known whether Jahanara asked them to meet her or whether they were just casual meetings.

The Dutch traders were meeting her through her Diwans or through her maids to get their work done.[161]

The Dutch had some insurance matter and for that they got suitable letters from the Diwans. But it was of no use. So, they approached Jahanara's nurse (Name. Huri Kahanam) and through her they got through to Jahanara, and got their work done.

There was a second daughter of Shaha Khan and her name was Raushanara Begam. This lady was not very friendly and affectionate with her sister Jahanara. Raushanara was always on the side of Aurangazeb and was his follower. She was selfish and revengeful. She was willing to side with Aurangzeb whether he was on the right or not. She was interested in snatching the Crown from her father and giving it to the ungrateful brother Aurangazeb. She knew all that was happening in the seraglio and faithfully reported everything to Aurangzeb.[162]

When Raushanara heard that Aurangzeb was planning to dethrone his father, she willingly placed all her gold, silver, money etc at his disposal and encouraged that ungrateful and wicked brother of hers.[163] Aurangzeb promised her that he would be give her the title of 'Shah Begum.'

In fact, he did confer on her the title of 'Shah Begam' in 1669 A.D. In addition to that, he also gave her a cash reward of five lakhs of rupees.[164]

In Aurangzeb's time too I there were many young and lively women. Some of them were quite ambitious also. But Aurangzeb did not give his wives much political rules. Dilras Banu Begam, one of the wives of Aurangzeb, was a beautiful and strong willed lady and Aurangzeb had admiration for her.[165] Another wife was Udaipuri Mahal. She had married him when she was very young, she continued to exercise on him enormous influence till his death. Because of her, he pardoned many faults of his son KamBaksh.[166]

Aurangzeb's sisters too, had played prominent roles in the reign of Aurangzeb. Raushanara Begam had helped him to becom the Emperor. Emperor Aurangzeb fell ill in the year 1662 AD When he was ill, she started taking an interest in politics. When Shahjahan was ill, Dara had not leaked the news to the outside world. Raushanara also did the same. She did not leak the illness of her brother.[167] She had with her the Royal Seal and on the strength of that she wrote letters to many Rajas and requested them to support nine year old Sultan Azam.[168] There was also the rumour that the Emperor (Aurangzeb) was dead. She forcefully requested the Hindu Rajas to support prince Azam. Another Prince, Muazzam resented it. She hated him and behaved arrogantly with him. The Emperor, somehow came to now about all these things and naturally he did like them.

He lost confidence in Roushanara. She also lost his love and regard. [169]

Another sister of Aurangzeb by name Janahara. (She was the elder sister of Roushanara) who was intelligent and she took an interest in politics and other administrative matters. Maratha hero, Shivaji had once paid a visit to Agra. This was in 1666 AD. Jaisingh, the ruler of Amber thought is would be better if they could an make alls with Shivaji. He thought, that by asking his help, it would be possible to conquer the Southern kingdoms of Bijapur and Golkonda. Jaisingh explained all these things to Aurangzeb and asked his permission. Later, he contacted Shivaji and even mildly forced him to visit Agra. In the initial stages, Shivaji was not willing to go to Agra, but by making use of all his persuasive skills, he (Jaisingh) made Shivaji visit Agra. The audience of Shivaji with the emperor Aurangzeb had been fixed for 12th May 1666 AD.[170] Aurangzeb was coming to Agra for the first time, after becoming the Emperor. There was great rejoicing, and festivities had been planned for the visit of the Emperor. It was also his (Aurangzeb's) 50th birthday. Shivaji had been advised to be there at least one day before so that he could also take part in the celebrations and official festivities. But unfortunately, Shivaji came late. He came by about mid-day. It was very late and Shivaji was rushed into the Durbar Hall without any proper guidance regarding the manners and procedures to be adopted in the Hall and before the Emperor. When Shivaji arrived in Agra, he had not been received with sufficient importance and honour.[171]

When he reached the royal court, the main function of Diwani-i-Am Reception was over and the Emperor had moved to Diwan –i-Khas. When Shivaji met Aurangzeb, Shivaji presented him 1000 muharas,

and two thousand rupees as 'nazar'. Apart from these he gave 5000 rupees as 'nisar'. Though his present was quite substantial, Aurangzeb did not show even a small sign of appreciation, Let alone talking nicely and in a friendly way. He did not recognize the gifts. He (Shivaji) was then taken away from the presence of the Emperor and was made to stand in the line of 'Mansakbars' i.e. the third degree of distinguished guests. The proceedings in the Hall continued and nobody noticed Shivaji.[172] Shivaji had never dreamt that he would be treated so badly. He was not given any title, or clothes or presents. Even kind and good words were not spoken to him. This made noble and self respecting Shivaji very angry. He turned his back and rudely walked away from the hall.[173]

The elder son of Jaisingh named Ram Singh, tried to pacify him. But some who were against both Jaisingh and Shivaji grouped together to take revenge on Shivaji. They urged the Emperor to take action for his rude and objectionable behavior.[174]

At the same time, the people of the harem also put pressure on the Emperor to take action. Jahanara received some customs money from Surat and Shivaji had stopped it. This was in 1664 AD. Therefore she was hell-bent on strong action against Shivaji. She told Aurangzeb, "Who is this Shivaji who could behave so badly and arrogantly before your Royal Presence? How could your Majesty over look such bad and oppressive behavior? If you allow this, tomorrow even a petty land lord may also behave badly. If he is left scot-free tomorrow all Hindus will never care for you. In such a situation, how can you run the country? "[175]

Shivaji had also attacked the brother of the wife of Jafar Khan at Poona. She was quite an influential lady and also wanted him to be punished.[176]

After carefully listening to al these things, Aurangzeb came to the conclusion that Shivaji should be killed or imprisoned.[177] Aurangzeb did not care much for the opinions of the women of the harem. But there must have been some considerations in the case of Shivaji.

Aurangzeb's daughters also took interest in political matters.[178] In 1658 AD when the war for succession was going on amongst the brothers of Aurangzeb, his father in law, Shah Nawaz Khan did not help him. Keeping this in mind, when Dara was defeated, Aurangzeb got his father-in-law imprisoned. Shah Nawz Khan was the maternal grandfather of Zaibunnisa. Ultimately, she interefered and got him released.[179] Once, prince Azam (1701-5) had a quarrel with a superintendent of his harem.[180] He was punished in that connection. Later, he sent a petition of pardon to the Emperor through his sister Padshah Begam.[181]

She had much influence in the administration. Once Aurangzeb wrote to her regarding the appointment of a person to a job. In the same letter, he mentioned that the appointment would be made only if she approved of it.[182]

Zebunnisa was a supporter of her younger brother Muhammad Akbar. In 1681 AD when there was a rebellion, she helped him. Prince Muhammad Akbar(son of Aurangzeb) had accompanied his father(Emperor Aurangzeb) in the wars against the Rajputs. He

command the army efficiently and kept it in his control. He listened to the advice of some evil people and on their advice, proclaimed himself as the Emperor. He called his father an un-Islamic person and even went to war against him. This was in 1681 AD In the course of the rebellion, Princess Zebunnisa kept constant contact with him. The rebellion failed and Aurangzeb's imperial forces seized his camels searched them carefully. During these searches, they got hold of the letters of Zebunnisa and showed them to the Emperor. The emperor was very angry with his daughter, Zebunnisa. He confiscated her property and also stopped a pension of rupees four lakhs per annum. She was also imprisoned at Salimghar. Throughout her life she was kept in prison and died there in1702 AD.[183]

Zinnatunnisa Begam was yet another daughter of Aurangzeb. She had been given a very responsible job of looking after the Maratha captives. Looking after the widow of Sambhaji and her son Shahu was also her job.[184] Zinnatunnisa and Akbar were born of the same mother. They had a soft corner for the Marathas, because they had good relations with Akbar. She was sympathetic towards YesuBai (wife of Sambhaji) and her son.[185] She protected them from her father's anger.

When Sahu went to the South, she helped him in his journey.[186] Balaji Viswanath, a Maratha, led an expedition to get the release of the captives in 1718 AD. Balaji had received promise of help and Sahu's interests were protected.[187]

Many times, Zenatunnisa acted as a mediator in the disputes between subordinate kings and the Emperor. Aurangzeb seized Jingi

under the command of Asad Khan and his son Nusrat Jung. The youngest of Aurangzeb was opposed to the two generals, who were only obeying the orders of Aurangzeb, the Emperor. Aurangzeb was very angry at his son's opposition to the policy of the Emperor and got him arrested. This occurred in 1693 AD. The Emperor was not ready to grant an interview to his son. But Zinatunnisa intervened and got him the interview. [188]

Amir Khan and been appointed as Governor of Kabul in the year 1678 AD.[189] His wife was a very intelligent and gifted woman who had a good grasp of the political situation of the country.[190] It was actually she, who ruled the country. Her name was Sahibji. In some military action, her husband suddenly died. She did not lose heart at the tragic event. She kept the death of her husband a secret and She herself dressed like him, fought in the field and brought his men safely to Kabul. If his death had been announced at that time, the enemies would have killed her soldiers. Her presence of mind and courage was appreciated by one and all.[191]

When the news of the death of Amir Khan reached Aurangzeb, he was very worried about the safety and security of the North West Province, a royal noble of his said, "Sir, please do not worry about the North West Frontier. Though he is dead, his wife Sahibji is there, who is even more competent than him. She will look after the area exceedingly well. The Frontier is very safe in her hands."[192] Aurangzeb trusted her and allowed her to handle the administrative matters very efficiently till the arrival of Alam, who had been appointed as the new Subedar of Kabul. When Sahibji came to see Aurangzeb, he

treated her well. He even permitted her to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca.

From the above it can be seen that even during the rule of a high puritan and traditional person like that of Aurangzeb, there were some powerful and fine ladies who left their mark as capable and fine ladies and have gone down in the pages of History. Aurangzeb personally did not like the idea of women coming out openly and doing administrative jobs which were considered as jobs assigned to men. But some of the ladies were really capable and talented and they could not with hold their talents with which they were full of. Aurangzeb's own ladies were like that. Aurangzeb did not oppose them much and just kept quiet.

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Chapter - 6

FACILITIES, RANKS, HONOUR, TITLES, STATUS AND OTHER PROVISIONS OF WOMEN

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FACILITIES, RANKS, HONOUR, TITLES, STATUS AND OTHER PROVISIONS OF WOMEN

Grants and Allowances and Privileges :

Officials and Men of Ranks under the Ladies of the Imperial Seraglios - grants of Apparel and other gifts made by the Royal ladies. Farmans, Sanada Nishans and Parwanas the Royal Stamp or Seal- Business and other commercial operations and enterprises of the Royal Ladies - Keeping touch and maintaining trade-relations with the outside world - Dignity, Esteem and High Regard Enjoyed by the Royal women.

The Royal Women enjoyed an elevated and revered status in the court of the Mughals. They were so highly regarded and appreciated that many people were able to approach the Emperor in person through their intervention. They spoke on the behalf of the petitioner and the pleas that were made to the Emperor. The petitions made by the Royal women usually were graciously heard by him.

Ranks and Positions :

To augment and increase the exalted position of these women high titles were given to some of them. Usually they were addressed by these ranks and positions. Akbar's mother was addressed by the title of "Miriam Makani" meaning ' The Mary of Both the Worlds.'[1] The mother of Jahangir was known as "Maryam-us- Zamani" (the Mary of

the Universe).[2] Similarly, Shahjahan's mother was also given the name of "Bilqis Makani" or The lady of Pure Abode.[3]

But the most well known and famous title was conferred on Mehrunnisa. In 1611 AD Jahangir bestowed upon her the title of " Nur Mahal" (the Light of the Palace) and later on the title was upgraded to Nur Jahan (the Light of the World).[4] The last title became so well known that her original name was completely relegated to the background. She was also known as "Shah Begam" (or the Regal Lady). The Iqbal Nama, mentions that the Rajput wife of Mughal Emperor Jahangir ,(the mother of Prince Khusru) named ManBai, was also given the title of "Shah Begum" by the Emperor. [5]

Shahjahan's beloved wife, in whose memory the world famous Taj Mahal was constructed, was popularly known " Mumtaz Mahal" (the Exalted One of the Palace) but her original name was Arjumand Banu Begam . She was also bestowed the title of "Malika-i-Jahan" (the Lady of the World). In 1631 AD the year of her death, the title of honour was transferred and bestowed upon Jahanara and the title of "Sahibat-uz-Zamani" (the Mistress of the Age) also was conferred on her.[6] She also enjoyed the royal name of "Padshah Begam."[7] She was also known as "Begam Saheb."[8]

The name of "Padshah Begam" was also conferred on Zinnat-un-Nisa, Aurangzeb's second daughter.[9]

Aurangzeb's wives were commonly addressed by the name of the place they hailed from, such as Udaipuri Mahal, Aurangabadi Mahal, etc.[10] It appears that he, Aurangzeb, did not like the thought of

bestowing high titles on his wives. In the lateera, Lal Kunwar, Jahandar Shah's favorite queen was bestowed with the title of "Imtiaz Mahal" (the chosen of the Palace). [11] In the same way, Muhammad Shah's mother, was conferred with the title of "Hasrat Begam" (the exalted lady).[12] His wife was bestowed with the title of "Malika-i-Zamani" (Queen of the world).[13]

Besides these regal names, the Royal women enjoyed titles of esteem and honour and sometimes received some dignified, alluring, fascinating and even intriguing surnames. From Emperor Akbar's rule onwards the harem women were usually known as Begams.[14]

Maintenance of Grants and Allowance :

The Mughal harem-women were given a regular allowance and maintenance of grants to meet their personal needs. On certain events they also received gifts from the Emperor to buy perfumes and scents, jewellery, clothing material, betels and other articles.[15] One half of the total of the amount, usually was paid in the form of cash from the Royal Exchequer, and the other half was given in the form of allotment and allocation of land, the income and revenue of which produced and generated more than the required amount.[16] Sometimes the Jagirs which were allocated to them were quite large. The Parganas which were thus allocated to the Begams were know as Burgbah.[17]

During the Mughal era the custom or practice of allocating and granting Parganas to the women of the Mughal seraglio was begun by Babur who gave a Pargana worth seven lakhs of rupees to Ibrahim

Lodi's mother.[18] He also allotted some holdings and places to Abu Said Mirza's daughters in the plains country.[19]

Humayun, after ascending the throne, paid a visit to his mother and sister and bestowed on them Jagirs.[20] Sher Shah, the Afghan ruler bestowed a grant of two Parganas to the wife of Mustafa Farmuli named Fateh Malika, for her support and care.[21] There is no sure information of Grants being bestowed in Emperor Akbar's time. But this does not mean that the practice was not continued.[22] Monserrate informs us that Gulbadan Begam had given Butzaris to the Portuguese during her stay in Surat, when she was leaving for Mecca. She had then aimed at securing their friendship. After her return she did not want to remain on good terms with them and demanded it back. The Portuguese felt insulted at this and went on the attack.

There seems to have been a positive number of rises in the Grants and Allowances of the women of the seraglio during Jahangir's time. Soon after Jahangir ascended the throne in 1605 AD he hiked up the Grants and Allowances of all the women who wore a veil, of the royal seraglio, from percent to 100 percent according to their status and rank and kinship.[23] The practice and custom of allocating land to the women appears to have been followed by Jahangir, quite liberally.[24] In Jahangir's Memoirs he mentions : "I ordered Haji Koka, who was one of my father's foster-sisters to bring before me in the palace such women as were worthy to be presented with lands and money."

Jahangir's chief Royal Consort, Nurjahan, was bestowed a number of Jagirs which extended all over the Mughal empire. Her Jagir of Ramsar was about 20 miles south-east of Ajmer.[25] In 1617 AD Jahangir received the good news of the conquest of his imperial forces under Prince Khurram in the Deccan and on this happy occasion he gifted Nurhahan the Pargana of Toda, as Jagir, the yearly income of which was 200000.[26]

Besides the Land-grants and Allowances Nurjahan received some special privileges and rights because of her exalted position. When her father, Itimadud-Daula died in 1622 AD all his possessions and holdings were conferred on her and she was also permitted the privilege to be bestowed with the rare honour of having her own orchestra and drums heralded, after those of the Emperor.[27]

Besides this, she is also reported to have been privileged with the prerogative of collecting octroi duty and taxes at Sikandarabad, on the cargo and merchandise coming form Bengal and Bhutan.[28]

Emperor Shahjahan seems to have continued the practice of permitting Grants and conferring Allowances to the royal women, soon after his accession to the throne. He granted Maintenance Allowances of two lakhs of rupees a year to Nurjahan. He settled a sumo of ten lakhs of rupees on Mumtaz Mahal.[29] But the greatest benefitter of this royal privilege was Jahanara, who was also called Begam Saheb. The Jagirs bestowed on her included the village of Achchol.[30] Farjahara,[31] and the Sarkars of Bachchol[32] Safapur[33] and Doharah.[34] Doharah, it must be mentioned here, was given to her for

the expenses of her garden. On the event of the inauguration of the twenty -third year of Shahjahan's rule, she was further given the Pargana of Panipat, the annual income of which was one crore dams.[35] Besides this, she was also bestowed the income of the city of Surat, one of the most flourishing commercial towns of the Empire, for her sundry necessities.[36] She was one of Shahjahan's favorite children and after the death of his adored wife Mumtaz Mahal, all his paternal affections seems to have circled round Jahanara. She looked after her father and her yearly allowance of six lakhs of rupees was increased to ten lakhs of rupees.[37] Besides this, she also was gifted many precious stones and costly gifts on special occasions and thus had amassed immense wealth.[38] It is on reliable information, that we come to know that she had a yearly revenue of approximately three millions of rupees.[39]

Despite the fact that Jahanara, supported the partisan Dara Shukoh, Emperor Aurangzeb treated her with the utmost respect, dignity and grace and continued her personal allowance. He was burdened with many economic problems, that soon after he ascended the throne, he enforced economy in administrative matter. But so far as Jahanara was concerned, he did not make any cut in her allowance. Instead, in 1666 AD on the auspicious event of the festival of Id, he gifted her one lakh of gold coins and raised her allowance by five lakhs of rupees and thus made it seventeen lakhs of rupees per year.[40]

In Jahandar Shah's reign, Lal Kunwar, is mentioned, to have received an Allowance of two crores of rupees for her household expenditures, apart from the clothes and jewels she received as gifts.[41]

Fifteen thousand rupees a month was set apart for the expenses of Nawab Qudsia, Muhammad Shah's mother, as well as those of the other women of the seraglio. [42]

Such Maintenance Allowances were not confined to persons of the royal family alone. The noblemen's wives also were bestowed this prerogative.[43] It is reported by Muhammad Sagi Mustaid Khan that Aurangzeb went to the house of Khalilullah Khan, the Subedar of Lahore, after his death and gave an annual stipend of fifty thousand of rupees to his widow Hamida Bano." These Allowances and Grants were continued during the Emperor's good will and pleasure; but sometimes they were also taken away when the beneficiary of such an Allowance or Grant aroused his Majesty's displeasure and annoyed the Emperor by her behavior and actions.[44] Two instances may be cited here as references:

1) In 1681 AD, when Prince Akbar rebelled, Princess Zebunnisa was in close correspondence with him. She was suspected of conspiring against the Emperor and was deprived of her annual pension of rupees four lakhs, and her property was aslo confiscated.

2) In 1687 AD, the property of Nurunnisa Begam, the favorite wife of Shah Alam, Emperor Aurangzeb's second son, was escheated and she was deprived of all her liberty. She was suspected of being in complicity with her husband, who carried on a secret correspondence

with Qutb Shah, the ruler of Golkunda, during the siege of Golkunda and also received presents form him and thus introduced laxity in military operations.

Officers of Rank under the Women of the Imperial Seraglio:

The women of the Imperial seraglio appointed their own officers and servants, in osrder to look after the maintenance and management of their various Jagirs and grants. Manucci reports that each woman of high position had a Nazir who looked after her estate, land property and revenue.[45]

Nurjahan's Jagirs were looked after by her own Vakils.[46] Hakim Hamam and Hakim Kashi's son served as Diwans in the Sarkars of Nawab Mumtaz Begam.[47] Beg was the Mir-i-Saman or Steward of Begam Saheb(Jahanara).[48] He held a Mansab in the Sarkar of Jahanara which yielded a revenue of seven hundred rupees to which two hundred rupees were added afterwards.[49] Later on she raised him to the status of Diwan and gave him the title or rank of Hakikat Khan.[50] In 1681 AD Saiyed Ashraf was appointed Mir-i-Saman of the Begum Saheb and was given the rank of Khan.[51] Sadullah Khan was appointed the Mir-i-Saman of Padshah Begum (Zinatunnisa).[52] These officers of rank along with other male-attendants were accommodated and lodged at a convenient distance away from the seraglio so that they could be summoned to duty easily.[53] Bayazid informs that in Ushturgardan Talgulgu Burj, the officials and Khwaja Sara of Nawab, Gulchehra Begam, Gulbadan Begam, Miriam Makani Begam and Mah-Chuchak Begam,, all resided here.

Grants of Apparels and other Gifts made by the Royal Women :

The Mughal court women not only received gifts and grants but some of them also awarded and conferred dresses of honour and other costly gifts to exceptional noblemen and generals who distinguished themselves in their field of service. On Humayun's accession to the throne in 1530 AD Mahim Begam, his mother, gave a grand feast and when it ended, she awarded special robes of honour to about seven thousand people.[54] Besides, she also gifted a number of mules, camels and horses to those present on this auspicious event.[55] This custom was followed also on a grand scale by Nurjahan because of her exalted status. When the long drawn out compaign with Mewar came to an end in 1614 AD and Rana Amar Singh of Mewar added to the Royal Army, his son Prince Karan came to the Imperial Court. Also, to the various gifts he received form the Emperor, he was given a rich dress of honour, a sword studded with jewels, a horse with a rich saddle and an elephant presented by the Royal Consort, Nur Jahan, herself.[56] Three years later, when Khurram was given the title of 'Shahjahan' in 1617 AD, on his conquest in the Deccan wars, Nurjahan was jubilant with joy, threw a grand banquet of victory and awarded him dresses of honour of great value and a great number of other costly gifts. She also presented valuable gifts to his children and to the women of his seraglio and to his chief servants and attendants. She is reported to have spent almost thirty thousand rupees on this occasion alone.[57] It is mentioned, "Nurjahan Begam prepared a feast of victory for her son Khurram and conferred on him dresses of honour of great price, with a 'nadiri' with embroidered flowers, adorned with

rare pearls, a 'sarpich' (turban ornament) decorated with rare gems, a turban with a fringe of pearls, a waist-belt studded with pearls, a sword with jewelled 'pardala'(belt), ' phul katara' (a dagger), a'sada' of pearls with two horses, one of which had a jewelled saddle and a special elephant with two females. In the same way, she gave his children and his women, dresses of honour, 'tirquz' (nine pieces) of cloth, with all sorts of gold ornaments; and to his chief servants as presents a horse, a dress of honour and a jewelled dagger. The cost of this entertainment was about 300000 rupees.

The beneficiaries of such presents were not only the Imperial dignitaties; noblemen of the court and faithful and loyal servants also enjoyed the same gifts made on such auspicious events.[58] On the Lunar- weighing ceremony of Jahangir in 1621 AD, Nurjahan gave dresses of honour to forty-five great Amirs and private servants.

The prerogative of making such grants was enjoyed by Jahanara too. She used to gift away 'Khilats' to ambassadors of foreign countries,[59] noblemen and other court officials and dignitaries on certain auspicious events.[60] This custom continued even in the period that followed. At the time of Muhammad Shah's accession to the throne in 1719 AD, when the court dignitaries came to accompany him, Nawab Qudsiya, the Emperor's mother presented dresses of honour upon them.[61]

Farmans, Sanads, Nishans and Parwanas :

The empowerment of issuing the Imperial or Royal Farmans was the sole right of the Emperor. The only exception to this order, is said

to be, that of Nurjahan who enjoyed this prerogative with her husband Jahangir and exercised her privilege, using Farmans, though very seldomly.[62] The Iqbal Nama mentions : "In addition to giving her the titles that other kings bestow, the Emperor granted Nur Jahan the rights of sovereignty and government. Sometimes she would sit in the balcony of her palace while the nobles would present themselves and listen to her diktats. Coins were struck in her name with this superscription : "By order of King Jahangir, gold has a hundred splendours added to it by receiving the impression of the name of Nurjahan, the Queen Begum." On all Farmans, also, receiving the Imperial signature, the name of 'Nurjahan- the Queen Begam was jointly attached." Besides, the Farmans, there were other important official documents like the 'Hasbul- Hukums' which were issued by the Prime Ministers; 'Nishans' which were issued by the Princes of regal lineage and blood and 'Sanada' and 'Parwanas' issued by other officials of authority of the court. It was in very rare and exceptional matters that official documents such as Hukeems, Sanads, Nishans were issued.[63] Some Nishans were also issued by Nadira Banu Begam, the wife of Dara Shukoh and Parwanas were issued by a Queen or a Princess. This rare prerogative was permitted only to those who held the highest position or status in the Imperial seraglio such as Hamida Banu Begam.[64] In fact, a Farman refers to an order issued by Hamida Banu Begam, mother of Emperor Akbar, in which she granted permission to Vittal, a Brahmin of the Pargana of Mahavan in the Sarkar of Agra, to graze his cows freely. Though it is a 'Hukum' it has been written in the style of a Farman.

Maryam-uz- Zamani,[65]

Nurjahan and Jahanara:

It is of great interest to know that the Farmans and Nishans that were issued were not applicable to their own Jagirs alone; yet their ambit and scope seems to be somewhat limited. Whatever Farmans of these Royal women were discovered, they do not possess much political clout or value. Matters of importance like appointments, transfers and dismissals are not dealt in them. Small privileges and minor cases such as payment of debts were often referred to the Imperial women who owned their own Jagirs. As a consequence, they issued commands and orders to grant such petitions and requests.

The Imperial Seal :

It was the prerogative of the Queens to affix a seal on the Imperial Farmans. Therefore, the Royal seal was a circular, small seal and was called by the Chaghtai name of 'Uzuk' which as a regulation, remained in the Imperial seraglio.[66] It was employed for Farman-i-Sobti, relating to titles and addresses, appointments of high standings, Jagirs and sanctions for large sums of money. During the time of Shahjahan, after the death of his dearly beloved queen Mumtaz Mahal the seal was given to Begam Saheb (Jahanara)[67] Qazwini cites : "Like her mother, she entrusted the seal to Sati Khanam who looked after her."

Besides, the Royal Seal, which was used for matters which concerned the Empire there was a separate seal which was used for all

matters concerning or connected with the female apartments or Zenana.[68]

Business and other commercial operations and enterprises of the Imperial Ladies :

The commerce and trade of the Mughal era was generally operated by the business community of this country, but there are some examples of royal Princes and Princesses as well as some noblemen of the state taking a keen interest in this field.[69] Though commerce and trade generally, was never a favorite occupation of women, much less of the women of royalty, still during the Mughal era some Imperial women appear to have been fascinated about this occupation just because a very flourishing foreign trade existed in the country at this time. Indian ships were plying their trade and sailing without hindrance in the Arabian Sea and were carrying from India cargoes of pepper, spices, ginger, dyes, opium and textiles to the Western Asian countries (of Persia, Arabia and Africa) and brought in wines, perfumes, brocades, China goods, amber, ivory, silver, gold, pearls horses and other items.[70] Persian chronicles, surprisingly and curiously enough, are silent about this matter.

The interests of the Imperial women in commercial and mercantile activities led them to possess their very own 'Junks'(a distinctive Chinese ship built with bow and stern shaped alike) some of these 'Junks' were heavy and weighed almost 1200 tons. One such Junk was owned and maintained by Jahangir's mother who ventured into the field of trade and commerce.[71] Her ships carried on a

flourishing and prosperous trade between Surat in Gujarat to other sea-ports on the Red Sea. William Finch recounts : " The Emperor's mother, or others acting under her protection, carried on extensive trading operations and at this time a vessel belonging to her was laden (with indigo) for a voyage to Mokha".[72] In the same vein, John Jourdain informs us that Kwaja Abdul Hasan..... " alledging unto him (Captain Hawkins) that he had sent to Biana to buy the indigo out of the Queen Mother's hand, her factor having made price for it"[73] One of the shops belonging to the Queen Mother was known as 'Rahimi.'[74] It often carried its cargo to Mocha.[75] At one time, in 1614 AD this ship, 'Rahimi' was captured by the Portuguese, which finally resulted in a war and confrontation with the Portuguese.[76]

Nurjahan Begam evinced a keen interest in mercantile and business activities. She owned a number of ships and showed great interest in foreign trade.[77] She dabbled in indigo and textile, fabric and embroidered cloth trade.[78] Asaf Khan was the main agent of Nurjahan. "The one and twentieth at this instant, came unto me from Asaph Chan (sic).... In the name of Nur Mahal that she had mouded the price for another 'Firman' and that she had obtained it and was ready to send down her servant with that to see and take order for our good establishment that she would see that we should not be wronged".[79] The chief motive for the above mentioned favor to the English was, that she wanted to send her goods on English ships as her cargo could not be exported and go out of India on account of the bad relations between the Portuguese and the Mughals.[80] Later on, she also became the defender and protector of English cargo and goods.[81] Sometimes

the sailors and the freight (goods) was only her possessions and the ship was leased from some other owner.[82] The English Factory Records (1622-23), mentions : " In 1622 the English seized many Indian ships returning from Mocha (in the Red Sea lies inside the straits of Bab el Mandel or farther north at Jidda in the port of Mecca) with a view to put pressure on the Emperor for opening the Red Sea trade with them. One of which " the shipper and goods only belonged to the King, and Normall (Nur Mahal).." She had maintained trade relations with the Portuguese who had colonized Daman and Due (Diu) who were embarking on a flourishing and prosperous trade between the Western countries and India.[83] On some occasions there arose problems due to the meddlesome nature of the Emperor, his mother and wife all "trading on their own accounts. "[84]

This custom was kept up by Jahanara Begam, the apple of Shahjahan's eye, who used to carry on business and 'trade on her own account.[85] She also possessed a number of ships. She entered into a cordial and friendly commercial alliance with the English and the Dutch and with their aid, carried on a widespread economic and commercial business and made large profits and gains from these ventures.[86]

Keeping in Touch and Maintaining Trade Relations with the Outside World :

All negotiations and correspondence with foreign countries and foreign dignitaries were generally the concern of the Mughal sovereign and his court officials, but some certain examples point out that at

times the Royal Women enjoyed the favour of receiving letters and personal presents from high officials and dignitaries of foreign countries.

During Akbar's times, Mir Mohammad Masum Bhakkari was sent on a good will mission to Shah Abbas of Persia and when he came back, he brought a letter from the aunt of the Shah for Miriam Makhani.[87] Nurjahan, the Royal Queen Consort of Jahangir received a letter from Imam Quli Khan's mother, the ruler of Turan, containing an "expression of good will and dues of acquaintance ship."[88] She had also sent some rarities from her country along with that particular letter. Nurjahan, in reply, sent a return embassy under Khwaja Nasir to Samarqand, who carried with him the best and choicest presents from India for the ruler of Turan's mother.[89]

The Royal Women, thus, sometimes enjoyed the prerogatives and privileges and honour of coming into touch with the women of Royalty of foreign countries and contributed to the betterment and development of good relationship and mutual friendship and good-will between India and the different countries of Western Asia.

Dignity, Esteem and High Regard Enjoyed by the Royal Ladies :

The Mughals esteemed and had a high regard for the women of the Royal Court. They are described as being honest, good-hearted, gentle and hospitable. One never heard of the ill-treatment of their wives and children, and they were devoted to their family very specially. The older members of the family were held in great dignity

and esteem and their advice and wish was usually given respect and followed religiously.[90]

When the Mughals came and settled in India, they continued to treat their women with utmost dignity and honour. They treated them with all kindness and ocurtesy and often went to pay their respect to the elder women of their household and spared no pains or efforts to make them live in comfort. Babur, the first of the Mughal Rulers in India led the way in this direction. He had a touching affection for his aunts, grand mother and other elderly ladies of the seraglio and often visited them in person, sometimes not caring for the severe climatic conditions.[91] Once when Babur went to visit Maham Begam, she asked him not to stir out during the hot season . To this Babur re;lied, "Maham Begam, it is astonishing that you should say such things. The daughters of Abu Said Mirza have been deprived of fathers and brothers. If I do not cheer them, how shall it be done?" He made suitable grants of land for the building of their residences and commanded Khwaja Qasim, an architect, to build palaces according to their individual tastes and likings.[92] Besides, Babur was courteous and polite to the women of the seraglio and he also went out of his capital city in order to receive and welcome them.[93] At one time, when his paternal aunts, Fakhar -i- Jahan Begam and Khadiza Sultan Begam arrived at the capital city, he "went above Sikanderabad to wait on them." "He was so particular about it, that he, sometimes, even in the absence of a proper conveyance, marched on foot to receive them."[94]

Humayun, another decent and upright one of the Mughal Rulers, was a very affectionate and loving person by nature. He had the highest regard for the women of the harem. He was especially fond of his sisters whom he often remembered tearfully during his illness.[95] After his accession to the throne in 1530 AD, he went to pay his respects to his mother, foster-mothers and sisters and kindly enquired about their health and well-being. He comforted them on the sad bereavement of his father and granted them Jagirs.[96] He often visited the residence of Gulbadan Begam where all the women of the harem used to assemble to accord him a warm and loving welcome.[97]

It seems that his affection was boundless and his personal care and attention to the well being and comforts of his mother and sisters aroused the jealousy of his wives and Bega Begam protested strongly against his neglect of all the wives.[98] But Humayun kindly and gently explained the situation and finally succeeded in convincing them and also removing any evious feeling from their hearts. " He also obtained from them in writing that he had not been neglecting them". When he won a conquest over Kabul in 1545 AD his mother Dildar Begam and sisters Gulchehra Begam and Gulbadan Begam went to him to offer him congratulations on his victory, he was so delighted with their visit that he organised great festivities and entertainment.[99]

When Emperor Akbar ascended the throne, he as Sovereign, continued the rich heritage and tradition of his predecessors and forefathers with regard to the respect which was accorded to the women of the seraglio.[100] He gave all due respect to Miriam Makani. And he rode out of his capital city to receive and welcome her.[101] He

was equally kind and considerate to his aunt and treated her with the respect that was due to her as his elderly relative.[102]

Emperor Jahangir to, was equally considerate and conscious of his duties towards the women of his seraglio. He had a high esteem and great affection for his mother and often went out of the palace, on foot, to receive her.[103] It was not that he alone, esteemed and adored his mother, but he expected that his son be similarly respectful and duty-conscious. After Rai Karan's submission, when Prince Khurram was honoured for his part in the conquest, Jahangir requested him to go and wait on his mothers.[104] Emperor Jahangir also had a deep and abiding affection and esteem for his sister Shakarunnisa, whom he unashamedly loved and respected as much as his beloved mother.[105] His adovation and affection for Nurjahan is well-known. He had such a high regard for her feelings and sensitivities that he "cut down the number of his wine cups at her insistence."[106] She was thus privileged to enjoy his whole-hearted trust and confidence.

At one time, in 1614 AD when he fell seriously ill, he did not confide or convey this news to anyone for fear that the news might cause unnecessary fear and panic and disrupt the whole administrative machinery. It was Nurjahan whom he took into full trust and confidence and whom he informed of his illness and indisposition.[107]

Jahangir's son, Shahjahan succeeded his father to the throne in 1628 AD. Shahjahan lost his mother at a very young age in March 1619 AD. He was ill-fated and incidentally almost all the elderly

female-relatives directly related to Shahjahan had passed away one after the other. His affection and esteem, thus centred around his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal Begam. In return, her utmost loyalty and devotion and affection for her husband was proved by the fact that she accompanied him through thick and thin and suffered along with him and bore patiently all the hardships and inconveniences of long and arduous journeys which Shahjahan had to embark on during the period of his rebellion.[108] Shahjahan silently acknowledged this loyalty and devotion and was equally loyal and devoted to her, Unfortunately and tragically she died in 1631 AD just three years after his accession to the throne. He was so shocked and grieved at hr premature death, that it is popularly believed that "his hair turned grey in a single night."[109]

As time elapsed, his entire devotion and affection slowly turned towards his eldest and the most favorite daughter. Jahanara. At one time, in 1644 AD when she was grievously burnt, Shahjahan was a worried father but made the best of arrangements for her medical treatment. After she was on the road to recovery, Shahjahan was overjoyed and organised great festivities and entertainment and distributed alms and food to the needy and poor.[110]

The sole women who was privileged to enjoy the esteem and affection of the austere and Spartan Emperor Aurangzeb was perhaps Jahanara Begam whom he regarded highly, even though he was aware fully of the fact that she had once been a favorite women of Dara Shukoh. Aurangzeb was very genuine and sincere to her and was ever willing to obey her every whim and orders.[111] The only other

women for whom Aurangzeb is said to have had a soft corner was Hira Bai (surnamed Zainabadi Begam) whom he seems to have been infatuated with. Contemporary records are silent about this affair. However, even if there was any such thing, it must have been just a passing -phase without leaving any effect either on the personal life of the Emperor or on the contemporary politics. As long as her father, Shahjahan was living Jahanara looked after him faithfully and lovingly. She moved to Delhi, after the death of her father, where she lived comfortably in the mansion of Ali Mardan Khan. Then in 1669 Ad Aurangzeb commanded Danish Mand Khan, a highly refined and cultured nobleman of the Empire, to wait and attend up on her. [112]

All the Mughal Emperors as well as the noblemen and other high officers of the court held great esteem and respect for the women. They were gallant and chivalrous by nature and dismounted from their horses at a respectable distance and bent low and bowed when in the presence of the royal women. The noblement were not permitted to see or meet the princesses in person. Their message and errands were sent through the eunuchs, who were appointed and employed for that very purpose. When permission was granted, the noblemen moved a few steps forward at a gentle stride. As a special favor the royal women sent a token of betel leaves and nuts by the eunuch in attendance. The noblemen accepted the token with a low bow, thus showing their esteem and high regard for the royal women of the seraglio.[113]

Foot Notes:

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33. Lahori, *Padshah Nama*, vol. II, Calcutta, 1868, p.426.
34. Rekha Mishra, *Women in Mughal India*, Delhi, 1967, p.62.
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37. Ibid., p.65.
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39. Ibid., p.216.
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43. Ibid., p.63.
44. Ibid., p.64.
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46. Rekha Mishra, *Women in Mughal India*, Delhi, 1967, p.64.
47. Saksena, *History of Shahjahan of Dihli*, Allahabad, 1958, p.4.
48. Rekha Mishra, *Women in Mughal India*, Delhi, 1967, p.64.
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Chapter - 7

SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF WOMEN

Chapter - 7

RELIGIOUS AND SOCIO ECONOMIC PRACTICES OF WOMEN

Food Habbits:

Indian tradition ordains that the same food should be prepared and eaten by both men and women. Of course, when women were pregnant, more tasty and nutritional food was given. Even the varieties could differ. During the period under consideration both (men and women) ate the same kind of food. Some variations were there and depended upon the climate, place, economic status, religious beliefs and upon some such considerations. The rich people were in position to consume more tasty, nutritious, and costly food, the poor were unable to do so. They had to be contented with ordinary and many times, even below ordinary food. Some how they had to fill their stomach.

The common food which was consumed by both men and women (in the period of our consideration) of middle and lower class of people was 'khichri.' This was made from rice, ghee, pulse and salt.[1] Regarding this, Bernier says, "They are satisfied with their 'khichri,' a mess of rice and other vegetables over which, when cooked, they pour boiled butter (ghee)." [2]

About it, Pelsaert says, "For their monotonous daily food, they have nothing but a little 'khichri', made of green pulse, mixed with rice, which is cooked with water over a little fire, until the moisture

has evaporated and eaten hot with butter. Many times, poor people were not in a position to afford butter. So many people ate it without butter. According to Terry, many times, "it was cooked even without pulse."[3] In addition to khichri, another food item was 'chapati' which was prepared from wheat-flour. Sometimes, with the wheat flour, they mixed barley flour also. Some people put butter on it to increase its taste and nutritional value. Terry writes that the Hindus prepared their bread not with the flour of wheat, but with a coarse well toasted grain. Thomas Roe mentions that The Hindus generally ate bread made of rice-flour, where as Muslims generally relished wheat bread. [4]

Most women of the Brahmin and Buniya castes were complete vegetarians. Consuming meat was forbidden. Their daily food was made up of bread, milk, butter, cheese, sweetmeats and various herbs.[5] The women of Bengal ate both vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods. The common items were vegetables, fishes and various sweetmeats. They ate many kinds of herbs also.[6] The sweetmeats they prepared were also of many kinds.[7] A famous writer named Dvija Madhav in his book "Mangal Chandir Geet" gives in detail a description of food that were liked by the women of Bengal. He writes that a rich man called Dhanapati's wife prepared several kinds of dishes for his second wife Khullana. She prepared dishes of herbs, 'Mungh-Dal', and a number of preparations with fishes called 'Rehu' and 'Sural', popularly known as 'koi'. In addition to these, she also prepared some scented rice-dish. Both the wives of Dhanapati liked the food preparation very much.

P.44 Bharat Chandra in his book 'Granthavali' says regarding the various types of dishes prepared by Bengali women. In this, he gives a list of dishes. Some of the names of the fishes mentioned by him are: Katla, Vekut, Chital, Folui, Bacharkhoira etc.[8] The women of the poorer classes in Bengal ate rice, 'sag' etc. Sometimes they consumed rice-stew (Known as 'ganji' in Kannada.) It is called Amani in local language. It is believed that this 'Amani' keeps the body cool, it is consumed regularly in summer. It is quite cheap, also so poor people consume it much more.[9]

During this period, women were in the habit of chewing 'pan' after meals. 'Pan' is good for the digestive system and it freshens the mouth. It was consumed. [10] Royal women and rich women were very fond of consuming rich food. About the food that was consumed at that time, by the royal seraglio; Abul Fazl writes: "The women of the seraglio were allowed to take food from the kitchen in the morning and went on till evening, and upto night."[11] He gives a list of the daily food of the Emperor and his royal women. Abul Fazl, refers to thirty kind of food preparations that were prepared by the royal kitchen.[12]

Royal women and the Umrah of the Mughal Court were always very fond of fine and tasty food. Noble women were never behind the royal women in this regard.

The food of pregnant women was different from the food of the men. During pregnancy, ladies did not like rice much.[13] Normally pregnant women liked things which sour in taste. Regarding this, Abul Fazl writes, "At such a time, there is an inclination for sub-acid drinks

and for sour-sweet fruits." The mother of Emperor Akbar, Maryam Makani, when she was pregnant, had requested for a green mango. Her brother Khwaja Mauzzam had given it to her. In the book 'Granthavali' by Bharat Chandra, the heroine of the book, Vidya, expresses her desire for a preparation known as 'Ammubala' which was sour in taste. This she had requested for when she was pregnant.[14] Sometimes pregnant women expressed their desire to eat dry and burnt soil. The heroine of Bharatchandra's "Granthavali" had expressed her desire to eat burnt soil. ('Pora-mati') [15]

Regarding the drinks especially in pregnancy, Hindy women never liked intoxicating drinks. But Muslim women imbibed many intoxicating drinks, especially when they were pregnant. In ordinary times, they did not like them much. Referring to the weakness for drinks by Royal Women, Manucci Says, "All women in Mahals love such beverages."[16] Muslim women liked consuming wine, opium, nutmeg and 'Bhang'. Some Mullas once requested Emperor Aurangzed to frame rules prohibiting Muslim women from taking Bhang, nutmeg, opium and other such things. [17] Some foreign travellers have made references regarding occasional use of wine by well-to-do Muslim women.

Manucci tells us that Jahanara, (eldest daughter of Shahjahan) had once invited the wives of the Quazi and other learned men and served them wine. They consumed too much of it and lost their self control.[18]

Mughal princesses and Begams consumed wine almost everyday. Amongst the women of the Seraglio. Jahanara and Udayapuri Begam were notorious for heavy drinking. Udaipuri Begam was one of the favourite wives of Emperor Aurangzeb. She drank many cups of wine daily and she was always in an intoxicated state for many hours in a day.[19] About Jahanara's love for wine, Manucci writes: "The princess was also fond of drinking wine, which was imported for her from Kabul, Persia and Kashmir. But, the best liquor she drank was distilled in her own house.[20]" Every night, there were fine entertainments such as music, dance while watching them, she took a large quantity of intoxicating drinks and lose control and fall to the floor. Later, she was carried to her room by the maid-servants. Women of rich families were also great lovers of wine. The wives of the Omrah and the Mansabdars drank wines from the cups of their husbands.[22] Even poor Muslim women drank quite freely on some occasions. The wives of the servants employed in royal service drank quite frequently. Usually, they drank wine. The wife of Khidmat Parast Khan, a favourite slave and attendant of Emperor Shahajahan, engaged herself completely in drinking, music and dance after the death of her husband. [23]

Hookkah (tobacco smoking pipe) was yet another intoxicant. Women also smoked it. Whenever a women guest arrived, it was a matter of courtesy to offer a Hookkah to the guest.[24]

In the period of our consideration, cooking was considered a great art and had been given a great impetus. It is natural for any

human being to crave for different varieties of tasty food. It is because of this innate urge, that cooking was considered as a great art and a woman was supposed to be good it. A woman who was excellent in booking was respected and admired. Women of rich families also learn cooking and it was a matter of great pride to them to boast about their cooking skills and knowledge.

The women of Bengal were very good in this art of cooking. In Bengali literature, there are references regarding the cooking skills of women-characters of the literary works. In Bengal, women gave more important to the preparation of sweets and also for the preparation of many types of fish-dishes. They did not pay much attention to meat dishes. Dvija Madhav in his literary work, "Mangal Chandeer Geet" refers to the cooking-skills of Khullana, the heroine of his work. The heroine prepared a number of dishes for her loving husband. She prepared a number of 'sags' (herbs) and stew with the Pulse of Mungh. She prepared excellent dishe with green plantation and coconut.

The she prepared an excellent fish curry with the 'Rahu' fish and prepared a deep tried dish of a special type of tasty fish known as 'Sarul.' Kullana also showed her special skills in the culinary art by preparing a number of sweet meats excellently. Some of the best sweets that she prepared were called Khirpuli and Kala-Bara.[25] Bharat Chandra in his 'Granthavali' also mentions about the cooking skills of other women. There was Padmamukhi, the first wife of Bhabananda. She was very good of preparing some tasty curries such as Ghanta and Shukta. She was able to prepare some 23 kinds of fine dishes.

She was quite famous for preparing excellent preparations of rice known as Vishnu-Bhoga, Gandeshwari, and Vasmati.[26]

It was not only Bengali women even Rajput women were excellent in cooking. Rajput Royal women were also very proud that they were excellent in cooking. The wife of Raja Mansingh of Amber, everyday cooked with her own hands for her husband. Her husband never ate food prepared by others, for the fear that it might be poisoned.[27] Mughal Royal women were also very good in preparing excellent food items.[28]

Hindu women were very careful in maintaining purity and cleanliness while cooking. Before cooking, every day, they were cleaned the kitchen floor and ovens and adjoining walls by a plaster of mud and cow-dung. [29] In the case of Hindu women, they always starting cooking after taking bath.[30]

Hindu women were very particular about purity and cleanliness and so, they did not take food prepared by strangers. Thus the food for the whole family was prepared by the lady head of the house-hold (generally, the mother). In her absence, the food was prepared by a Brahmin cook.[31]

The various utensils that were being used in a Hindu kitchen, were made of either brass or bronze.[32] But the Muslims used either earthen or copper utensils.[33] In the Royal kitchen, the utensils were made either from stone or from earth (or mud). But in Royal houses, the food was served in gold, silver, stone and sometimes, special earthen-ware dishes and platters. Sometimes, copper and china ware

dishes were used. Hindu kings and princes also ate from golden utensils and golden dishes.[34]

DRESS: The dresses of women depended upon the social and economic status of women and also upon the climatic conditions. The dresses of the Hindus and the Muslims many times differed. Hindu women generally wore saris of different colours. The Sari is a long piece of cloth tied round the middle part of the body and thrown over the shoulders and head. Writer Tavernier informs us that a 'Sari' was usually 30to40 feet long and four feet wide. In some books, it is written as Lang. Stavorinus describes the sari as follows: "... a piece of cotton cloth which is thrown over the shoulder." Manucci refers to it as 'Pane' which is eighteen yards long and thirty eight to forty four inches wide. Bowrey refers to the sari as used by women of Orissa, thus: "The Ourias are very poor. They wear it as something like a lungee or a white cloth made fast about their waists." From Bowrey's description we come to the conclusion that the women of Orissa, especially women from the lower classes did not wear any upper garment. They were wrapped up the entire sari around their waists without wrapping up a part of it on the upper part of the body.[35] The saris they wore were of many colours.[36]

They did not wear blue-coloured saris because that was considered as inauspicious. Women of the low class, wore blue coloured Saris. Only the Sudras wore blue coloured ones.[37] Above the sari, they wore an Angiya which was a small jacket which covered the breasts, shoulders and upper portions of the arms. They also wore

underwear which was similar to the modern petticoat. This was worn mostly by Hindu women belonging to the upper castes and well to do sections of the society. In the books of their period, we can find references to Angia. In many cases Angia has been referred to as 'Kanchulli'.[38]

The quality of the saris worn by the women depended on their economic conditions. Rich women wore costly and high class saries. They were made from good quality muslin, silk or cotton. Manucci refers to it as follows: "They are also obliged there by to put on such exceedingly thin raiment that their skin shows through. They call these clothes saricas." [40] But poor people and lower class people wore cheap and coarse type of saris. Such saris were known as khuiya or Khaumabars.[41] These saris were made from cheap fabrics such as jute fabrics. Poor women in Orissa covered the lower parts of their body with leaves. Such a way of covering their bodies with leaves was much in vogue in the interior parts of Orissa.[42]

Bengali women took a lot of care regarding their dress. Over their saris they wore belts on their waists. The belts were adorned with fine bells. They were called as Kinkini or Ghunguru.[43] The saris they wore were of many colours and designs. Some of the popular varieties are Tasar or Matkah (a silk sari), Pater-Pachra (a silk sari of coarse texture), Ganga Jali (a cloth of fine texture, usually white in colour), Megh-Dambur Sari (black sari), Mayur-Dambur Sari (a sari of mixed colours), Asmantara (a blue sari of fine texture with beautiful embroidery), Nilambari (a sari of sky blue colour), Hiraman Sari (a sari

of yellow colour). Apart from thee types, there were some other saris which were quite popular. They were, Jatra-Sidha, (i.e. for an auspicious journey).Kapda Raja (king of Saris), Manja-Phul (Sari soft and white like flowers) and Agni-Phul (spark of fire). [44] Another famous Bengali saru was 'Sri Ram Sari' which was a sari of fine cloth.[45]

People belonging to the areas now covered by the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh wore many kinds of saris. They were called as Jhilmil (a kind of soft and fine textured sari), Pemchha (a printed silk sari), Doria (a type of cotton sari), Bidri (a sari of fine fabrics) and Kankvegi sari (a fine sari which was black in colour).[46] Many times, rich women wore a veil over their saris. In Bengal, the veil was called 'Mekhala.' It was a statement of fashion of Bengali women, to use 'kocha' in their saris. 'Kocha' was worn in a particular fashion, in which the tuck of the lower garment hung loosely in front of the sari. This fashion even now prevails in Maharashtra. But, in modern Bengal, it has gone out of fashion.[48]

Sometimes, women tucked a part of their sari over the shoulder, which they thought enhanced their looks. Whenever they came across an elderly person, they put their sari on their head as a mark of respect.[49]

Angia was considered by women as a sort of fancy dress. Grown up ladies and married women wore The 'Angiya's and it seems that they were very popular. 'Angias' were of deep colour. Just blooming young girls liked the red coloured Angias.[50] The Angia was also known as 'Kanchuli.' It was also called Kanchuki. [51,52] There were two types if

Kanchuli. The first one was a shorter one and covered only the breasts and it was tied at the back by ribbons. The second one was longer. It not only covered the breasts, but also ran down upto the waist. Stavorinus says, "They support their breast, and press them up words by a piece of linen which passes under the arms and is made fast on the back."[53] The fashionable women of Bengal wore kanchukis on which there was fine embroidery work (needle work). With needle work, they created fine figures of 'Dashavatar' of Lord Vishnu or fine figures of Raasaleela of Lord Krishna. Specimens of these Kanchukis are even now found in Dacca, Banaras and other North Indian cities.

Women of North western provinces used the 'Lahanga.' It is a waist cloth tied an both ends with a band at the waist. These are still used by women in the north, western parts of the country. [54, 55]

Sometimes, they wore a choli and a Duppata. (choli is another form of Angiya).[56,57] Jayasi, in his literary work 'Padmavat' refers to a 'Lahanga' which was used by the heroine. It was made up of the special printed cloth which was known as 'Tara Mandal'[58] Lahanga was also known as 'Changra'. [59] The Banjara women also used the lahanga. They used to be beautifully ornamented with 'cowries' (i.e. shells) which were sewed on to their apparel. Their lahanga mostly used to be either red or green in colour.[61] Their 'cholis' were decorated with small mirrors at visible portions in order to enhance the beauty of the choli. In oder to embellish it still further, they got it well-embroidered.[62]

The dress materials of the Muslim women were fairly similar to the dress materials of the males. They consisted of a trouser, a tight fitting tunic with a belt on the waist and the tunic almost came down to the knees.[63] The sleeves of the tunic were slightly above the elbows. In the period of Aurangzeb, he had issued an order banning women from wearing tight trousers. But later on it was suspended by Princess Jahanara. [64] They put a scarf (known as a Duppata) to cover their head and upper part of the body. Manucci refers to it as 'a sheet of cloth.' Badaoni refers to it as 'chadar'.[65] The royal women used cholis[66] of fine colours and designs. Sometimes cholis were referred to as 'ungeeah.' Above all these, they wore a Burqa. A Burqa is a long gown covering the body from head to foot. This they wore whenever they went out of their homes. Dellav Valle, refers to it as follows: "when they go along the city, if it not be closed coaches, but on foot or on horse back, they put on white veils, where with they cover their faces as it is the custom of all Muslim women. There not says that they used the veil whenever they went out of their homes."[67] Hindu ladies also covered their heads with a kind of small cloth and they called it the 'Ghungat.' The breeches of both men and women were made from different cloths such as cotton, silk etc. They were of various designs and colours. Normally Muslim women wore red and white garments.[70]

Royal women and women of rich families wore Qabas (a long open gown) which was usually made of wool. This they wore in winter and in chilly weather. Some ladies wore kashmiri shawls, The specialty of this 'shawl' was that it was so smooth and thin and fine, that a whole shawl could be made to pass through a finger-ring.[72] The

trousers and shirts of Mughal ladies were decorated with nicely inlaid threads of gold and silver. Some Mughal princesses put on a 'turban', with the permission of the Emperor. There was something like a pendant which was placed at the centre of the forehead that would have been embellished with pearls, jades, and other costly stones.[73] Empress Nurjahan was a women of great fashion. She herself had designed some costumers and they became famous by names such as our Dudani, Pancha Tolia, Badlah, Kainariand Farsh-i-Chandini. She also designed a fine set of dress for the bride and bride-groom. That set of apparel was named as 'Nur-Mahali.'

Both Hindu and Muslim women never used any gloves or stockings. Because of the warm weather. Bernier also says that they did not use stockings because of the excessive heat.[75] Women of high rank in society wore shoes of various colours and designs. In this regard Manucci refers to the shoes of the wife of a noble by the name of Khalimula Khan (he was the younger son of Mir Miraznyazdi and his wife Asaf Khan's grand daughter) in Shah Kahan's court , the cost of which was three million rupees, because they were studded with precious stones. The statement of Manucci is perhaps an exaggeration. The Hindu women used shoes only very rarely. They decorated their feet with numerous ornaments made of silver and other metals.[76]

Kashmiri women dressed in a different way as compared to others. About their dress, Jahangir says as follows: They use a tunic or pattu for three or four years; they bring it unwashed from the

house of the weaver and sew it into a tunic, and it does not reach water till it falls to pieces.[77] It is considered wrong to wear drawers (Izars); they wear the tunic long and ample as far as the head and falling down to the feet, and they also wear (perhaps tie it at the waist) a belt. They covered their bodies with a veil which fell from head to foot. [78]

PURDAH:- 'Purdah' (a veil) was one of the most important social practices of the time. It was this obnoxious practice that pushed the women to the kitchen and made them lose touch with the outside world. They were largely confined within the four walls of the house. It forced upon women the drudgery of house keeping and looking after the children. They were never allowed to do any work outside their homes and so their only jobs were working in the house and implicitly obeying their husbands and elders in the house and trying to excel in both these works. By doing so exceedingly, they wanted to prove them selves highly worthy people.

But this should be remembered that the Purdah system was not prevalent in ancient India.[79] They (the women in ancient India) never wore any veil and never concealed their faces from strangers.[79] The ancient women were free to move any where they liked and were free to mix and talk with strangers also. (P.58) Thus the Purdah system came to India after the advent of The Muslims. Firoz Shah was the first Muslim Monarch, who for the first time forbade Muslim women to visit mausoleums outside Delhi. Strict seclusion was once again, imposed by Taimurlane who issued a proclamation to his powerful

army and his followers that they should conceal their females from the sight of the strangers and he himself invented some covered conveyances for their women and confined them to their homes. They were forbidden to meet with members of opposite sex, unless they were very close relatives.[80] There were many factors which were responsible for the growth of the Purdah system. The main reason was the sense of insecurity faced by the women because of the influx of foreigners, especially the Mongols. Their troubles lasted for a period of two hundred years.[81] Another factor was, the tendency to imitate the ruling class. The ruling class people wore the veil and so the other noble and rich people also started to wear it.

As compared to the Hindus, the Muslims were strict in wearing the 'Purdah.' The Laws of Islam commanded that Muslim women must wear the 'purdah.' Regarding the Purdah, the Prophet says, "All females belonging to the faithful should be compelled to wear a close veil over their face and figure whenever they went abroad."[82] On Muslim girls started wearing the veil from a very young age, which made her quite accustomed to that practice.[83] Even a very liberal ruler like Akbar was also quite strict in this aspect. He also wished that the Purdah System should be protected. He had also passed a regulation in this regard. Badom says, "And if a young woman were found running about the lanes and bazaars of the town and while so doing, either did not veil herself or allowed herself to be unveiled, She was to go to the quarters of the prostitutes and take up the profession."[84] Strict observance of this rule made women to become more and more

secluded. If a wife was made to unveil herself, it was considered as an act of great immorality.

The strict adherence to this system can be seen from the following example: Once the wife of Amir Khan, the Governor of Kabul was passing through a lane in Delhi in a litter. (Palanquin). Suddenly a royal elephant appeared in an angry mood and wanted to destroy her litter. The bearers dropped it and fled away. The brave women, who was inside it, quickly jumped out of it and ran into a nearby shop. Her husband Amir Khan, felt insulted as she had failed to observe Purdah and wanted to divorce her. But Shahjahan, personally intervened. [85] The Muslim women wore the veil before all the males, except before her husband and close relatives. Manucci says, "It is true that Muslim women do not allow their faces to be seen by any one, it being contrary to their law, to allow themselves to be seen with an uncovered face."[86] Because of this they covered their faces and their bodies from top to bottom by a Burqa. Fryer writes, "The Moors are by nature plagued with jealousy, cloistering their wives up and sequestering them the sight of any besides the capon that watches them."[88] Terry further adds, "The Mohametan women except they be dishonest or poor come not abroad."[89] Thevenot also adds, "If these Indian women be idolaters, they go bare faced; and if they are mohemetans they are veiled."[90] Moghal royal women lived a more secluded life than the other Muslim women. Holden says, "The women of the royal house seldom appear except in the character of devoted or intruding wives and mothers whose words are never heard on this side of the curtain which shuts them away from the world."[91]

Purdah was observed strictly. If a women fell sick, her doctors were not allowed to touch her body for the purpose of examination. He was not allowed to see her face or touch her body. A cloth was wrapped all over the body of the patient for a few minutes and later on that cloth was dipped in water. The physician would observe the colour and smell of the cloth and then diagnose the disease and dispel medicines. There is another peculiar method of treatment for the women (royal women) by the doctor.[93]

A women going outside without a veil was a crime. But, some extra ordinary women like Nurjahan, had the intelligence and courage to disregard this Purdah System. Like the Emperors, she was gave 'Darshans' (audience) to the people from the balcony of her house. She freely met and discussed with important officials and nobles. An public functions she appeared before the people without a veil and made attempts to understand the problems of the people first hand.

Just like the Muslim women, Hindu women, especially women of the higher classes observed the 'Purdh' System. For them, it was the question of greater respectability from the people. So they designed their own veil. It was shorter in size and less elaborative and less complicated. It was called a 'Ghungut.' We can call it a 'mini-purdah.' There are references to this 'Ghungat' in many Bengali literary works.[95] Like Muslim women, Hindu women of rich and high society, also moved in closed litters. This system (moving in closed litters) became all universally-accepted norm among the princely families of Rajaputana.[96]

But among the Hindus, middle-class and lower-class, women were free from this horrific practice of 'Purdah.' In a way, they were free from this bondage.[97] From the literary works of those days, we come across cases of many women of poor family who were moved from place to place, in search of a living and work. Dwija Madhav says about the movement of the wife of a flower by the name of Phullara. She freely went to the market to sell meat. The poet says, "with very slow movements, she proceeds towards the market with a basket filled with meat on her head." In Bharat Chawra's 'Granthavali' also, we find a reference to it. The poet refers to a woman belongs to the 'Gavden class', who went to the market frequently.[98]

The women of lower and peasant class did not wear the 'Purdah.' They freely worked in the fields, brought water from the wells and participated in all kinds of works.[99] Badaoni says that during Akbar's time, a woman had been allowed to sell wine near the palace.[100] Among the Rajput, women who belonged to the classes of hunters, cultivators and porters did not observe 'purdah.' They did not observe 'Purdah', because they had to work outside. Referring to this, Todd write: "The women were required to do all external works, as well as internal economy."

Therefore we can say that 'Purdah' was observed by the upper and rich class people. From the point of view of women, no doubt, it was a big hindrance in their progress. It decreased their position and made them to be always under the thumb of their men, especially their husbands.

Toilets: To their physical beauty and charm the proper use of cosmetics is the basic instinct in all women. The Indian women were very particular about their toilet facilities and make up. Various travellers have spoken about their make-up efforts to make themselves neat and trim. Malik Muhammed Jayasi[102], Biharilal[103], Keshav Das[104] and Dvija Madhav[105] refer to the various types of cosmetics with which the women were quite familiar. According to Dvija Madhav, articles of toilet consists of sixteen items and some of them are as follows:

Morning duties (that is: brushing the teeth, washing the eyes and mouth and other acts of bodily cleanliness), bathing, anointing the body with sandal paste and other essences; wearing washed and beautiful clothes; braiding the hair, putting vermilion mark on the parting of the hair; decorating the forehead with Tilak, making a black spot known as Til on the check; covering the laws with mehendi, (i.e. Henna Paste); painting the feet with Alta and Mahabaru; wearing the flower and gold ornaments; eating pan (i.e. betal) to redden the lips; colouring the teeth with 'Missee'; applying collyrium in the eyes.

Abdul Fazl also gives us a description of women's toilets in his works. Among other things, he mentions the following items: - bathing, anointing with oil, braiding the hair, anointing with sandal wood, wearing different types of dresses, sectarian marks of caste, using collyrium, staining the hands with mehndi and eating pan.[106]

During the period of our consideration, taking a bath was one of the most important things for a woman. Especially Hindu women were

very particular about a bath. Without taking a bath they did not perform any religious activity and they did not cook food without taking a bath. Bengali women took a bath quite frequently. About this Foster writer: "And their (Brahmins') wives do come by10, 20 or thirty together to the water side singing and there do wash themselves and then they use their ceremonies."[107] Muslim women of higher society were also very particular about a bath, just like the Hindu women. They used all sorts of materials and tricks in order to keep their skin soft and glowing. They took maximum amount of precaution to prevent the wrinkling of their skins.

The Hindu women, before taking a bath, rubbed their body with myro-bolan paste (Amalaki or Awarh) to clean their skin and hair.[108] After a bath, they smeared their hair with some oil, which was usually scented. The women of Bengal anointed their hair with perfumed oil known as "Narayana Taila" or "Vishnu Taila."[109] Other well-to-do Muslims also used finely-perfumed oils, to anoint their hair.[110] Hindu women also used scented oils.

Both the Hindus and the Muslims used many essences to impart a fine fragrance to their bodies. The Hindu women smeared their bodies with Kumkum, Agura, Chandan (Sandal Paste) and Kasturi (musk).[111] The women in the regions which are now called Bihar and U.P. used Karpoor and Chandan to scent their bodies.[112]

Well to do women and Mughal women used costly scents made of sweet rose-water and other costly items. Nurjahan's mother herself had invented a scent which was called "Jahangiri Ittar."[113] In his

Memoirs Jahangir says, "There is no other scent of equal excellence to this. It restores hearts which have gone and brings back withered souls."[114] This 'Ittar' was very popular among rich people. Empress Nurjahan had also invented an excellent scent from rose-water.[115] There was a huge demand for scents and good quality scents manufactured from Benaras[116] and Lahore. [117]

For Hindu women, using vermilion was a duty and was compulsory also, using on the parting of the hair was a symbol that the lady was married.[118] This practice of applying vermilion on the parting of hair was in practice even among the Muslims. This was especially so, in case of Hindu women who had converted to Islam.

But orthodox Muslim never used Vermilion.[119] Hindu women decorated their forehead with a 'Tilak' (or Bindi) and in addition to it they also used a vermilion dot. In this literary work 'Bihari-Ratnakar,' the heroine decorates her forehead with Bindi, after her bath. The women of Bengal painted Tilak known as Alka-Tilak. This was very popular among the women of Bengal. Dvija Madhav in his "Mangal Chandeer Geet" writes: "The Alaka-Tilak enhanced her beauty much more.[121] Colouring the lips by chewing pan was resorted to by both Hindus and Muslim women. The colouring of lips enhanced their beauty to a great extent.[122] To enhance the beauty of the eyes. Especially among Hindu women, another method of improving their looks was by tattooing on various parts of the body, especially on the hands. There were various designs such as flowers, creepers, etc in

the pattern of tattooing. This practice of tattooing arms still exists in rural areas of North India."[125]

During of the period of our consideration, decorating hands and feet with Mehandi[126] was very common. In addition to Mehandi, Hindu women used Alta and Mahabaru to colour their feet.[127]

Hair was one of the most important things for a woman. Beautiful, lustrous, shining and well-grown hair was considered as a great beautifying factor and if it was long it was even more better. So, they took maximum amount of care of their hair and kept it in fine condition. Foreign travellers who visited the country in the period of our study, were very impressed by the long and shining hair of the women. They showered praise on the b eautiful hair of the women. Women allowed their hair to grow freely and well after the age of twelve. Upto 12 years, only a small amount of hair was kept on the head as in the case of a boy. Tulsidas says that hair is much more than a fine ornament for a lady.[130] There were many beautiful methods of braiding the hair and damsels took great pride in braiding them in many ways.[132] Khopa, (a big role of hair on the back side of the head) Beni (a hair-tress Chura)[133] (a role of hair on the top of the head) were some of the ways in tying them so as to appear attractive. Muslim women tie their hair with silk ribbons.[134] Sometimes they rolled their hair forward in the form of a knot.[135]

They wore beautiful flowers and ornaments of gold and silver on the hair. Even now women decorate their hair with flowers.[136]

Ornaments:

From time immemorial, women have had great fascination and even love for ornaments. They liked to look attractive with various kind of ornaments. Every women would love to wear as many ornaments as possible. If they could not afford gold ornaments, they did not mind wearing ornaments made of cheap materials such as silver, copper etc. For Hindus, ornaments were very sacred also. A married women wore a nose-ornament of gold, which in their opinion kept the breath pure. It was a symbol of a married lady to wear ornaments from head to toe.

They did not wear ornaments, if they lost their husbands and became widows.[137] To wear ornaments, even at a very early age, the ears of the girls were pierced. As years rolled by, those small holes used to become wide due to the weight of the ornaments. But in their desire to wear ornaments, they never cared for this.[138]

Foreign travellers have given detailed accounts of the ornaments used by women of those times. Abdul Fazl refers to thirty seven types of ornaments.[139]

Among the head-ornaments, we can mention here a very popular ornament of those times. It was called as 'Sinthi.' It was in use by women of Bengal. It consisted of three gold strings, two of which were joined with the ears and another was put on the parting of hair (on the head). This ornament is still in use in Bengal and many other parts of North India. In Rajputana, it is known as 'Sirbandi.'[140] Shish-Phul is an ornament resembling marigold. Many[142] is yet

another ornament worn on the parting of the hair. Kor Biladar[143] is worn on the fore head. It consists of five beads with a centre drop. 'Sekra'[144] is an ornament of seven or more strings of pearls, linked to studs and hung down from the foré-head. It is long enough to cover the face. It was used on special occasions such as births and marriages. The Mughal women and rich Muslim women wore an ornament on the right side of their head, it being a small ornament made of Rubies and pearls.[145] 'Binduli' is another ornament of the forehead. Abdul Fazl says that the size of the ornament 'Binduli' was smaller than that of a gold Mohar.[146]

The ear was also decorated with a number of ornaments. The following are some of the ear ornaments mentioned by Abdul Fazl: 'Khuntila', all ear ring, 'Karnaphul' (ear-flower), 'Durbachh', a type of 'ear ring', Pipal Patti, Bali Champakali and Morbhanvar. (all ear Pendant, shaped like a peacock)[147]

In addition to the above some other ornaments were also used mostly by Bengal women. Some of them are Kundal. (this ornament is still in use in some parts of North India)[148] Kundal is made of gold in-laid with pearls. Makar Kundal, a special type of ear ring, resembling a Makar-head. Kanbala or Chakravali, all ear-ring beautifully decorated with pearls, and fixed on the upper part of the ear. 'Thumka', 'Swarna' 'Champaka' and 'Sekal' were very popular ear-rings. 'Hiramangalkadi' was another type of ornament of the ear. The royal women wore costly stone-studded ear rings.[152] Nose-ornaments were the contributions of Indians. This came into existence only

during the Muslim rule. It is interesting to note that nose-ornaments, were unknown in ancient Sanskrit literature or in Pre-Muslim Literature. With the coming of Muslims in India, nose-ornaments became very popular both among the Hindus and also among the Muslims. The nose-ornament very commonly used was 'Besar'. This had a broad piece of gold with a jewel attached to its upper end, at the other end was a gold wire clasped to a pearl and suspended from the nose. Another type of nose-ornament was 'Nath' or 'Nathani' which is a nose-string worn in the nostril with a ruby between two pearls or other jewels. 'Phuli' and 'Lalang' are two other nose ornaments.[157] 'Latang' is a nose-ornament in the form of a clove. The women of Sindh used nose-ornaments called 'Canto' and 'Tada'. [158,159] Kanto is a small ornament which is in the shape of a mushroom. In it, six or seven pearls have been set around a diamond which is at the centre. Jada is similar to 'Kanto'.

Muslim women many times used the nose-ornament called 'Bulaka' or 'Bulakha', consisting of one or three pearls strung on a gold wire. This ornament passes through the wall between the two nostrils.[160]

The women's neck was also embellished with many types of golden ornaments such as 'Har'.[161] Then there is the necklace which is shorter than the 'Har.' There is another kind of necklace called the 'Sateshwari.[162] This has seven gold strings and worn round the neck. There is yet another ornament called 'Gulband.'[163] In Bengal this ornament is known as 'Gribapatra.'[164] M.M. Jayasi in his 'Padmavat'

describes this ornament as 'Kanth seri'[165] and Purushottam Das in his work 'Kanchi-Kaveri' refers to this ornament as Kanti-Mali.[166] 'Hans' is yet another type of ornament. (It is a necklace)[167] The Mughal women used a 'Har' which had three or five strings of gold. When worn around the neck, it hung down right upto the stomach. This necklace was designed on the same pattern as 'Sateshwari.' The difference was that, 'Sateshwari' was made of gold. Generally, Mughal women wore costly necklaces, decorated with valuable stones.

Nurjahan, for example, wore a necklace containing forty beads. The cost of each bead was forty thousand rupees. She had received the necklace as a present from Emperor Jahangir.

The women were always eager to exhibit their beautiful arms. So, they wore a number of ornaments. The ornaments were exceedingly beautiful in their designs and were exquisite. On the upper parts of their arms they wore an armlet which was called 'Tad' or 'Taga', a pair of plain gold beads about two inches in breadth.[169] Another type of armlet called 'Keyur' had a gold band. It had fine decorations on it. It was used in Bengal. Another fine ornament was 'Baju Band.'[170] It was a fine bracelet.[171] Bengali women wore this high up on the arms and was worn on the right arm. But women in the areas which are now called as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh used these on both arms. It was a thick band of gold and there were fine engravings on it. It was tied to the arm with a string. Even rich and Royal Muslim women used these ornaments. There was another ornament called 'Maduli' or 'Tabiz', which was also on the arms an ornament similar to

'Baju-Bandh.' The main difference is 'Maduli' (or Tabiz) had more decorations on it and was less thick as compared to the 'Baju-Bandh.'

'Jasam' was yet another ornament of the arms, which was made up of double rows of 'Maduli.'[174] 'Kankan' or 'Kangan' was another type of bracelet made of gold with small knobs.[175] 'Bala' was yet another type of bracelet. Similarly, 'Bahuti' or 'Bahu' were also other types. This was similar to 'chud', but was slightly smaller.

Other types of bracelets are 'Gajrah', which is made of gold and pearl,[179] and Jawe[180] consisting of five golden barley corns, strung in silk and fastened on each wrist. Churis or Churins[181] are thinner bracelets and they are used in large numbers. (About ten at a time on the wrists) Muslim royal women put on their wrists pearl-bracelets.

Besides these, 'Shankha' a type of shell-bracelet was also in use. These were used by Bengali women. During the period of our study, a shell-bracelet known as 'Lakshmi. Bilass Snakha' was very popular among the women of Bengal.[183] There was another ornament known as 'Hat Padma'[184] which was to be worn on the back of the palm. There was a lotus-shaped pendant and at the centre of it a ruby was set. It was fixed to the rings worn on all the fingers by thin chains. They further embellished their hands by using rings of many beautiful designs, on the finger. In Dvija Madhav's Mangal Chandeer Geeth, it is referred to as Anguthi.[185] The royal Mughal Women and also rich women used a thick type of ring which was worn on the thumb. It had a mirror fixed in it.[186]

On the waist they wore a waist-belt, beautifully designed and decorated. There was another waist-ornament known as 'Chhydrkantika'[188] on which golden bells were fixed.

Women also wore anklets. They were called 'Payal.' It is also known as 'Khalkhal' in Arabic. 'Kaḍu' was yet another silver anklet.[190]

Unchhat or Ujjahatika[191] was worn on the toes of the feet and was very popular in Bengal. 'Nupur' was another type of ankle ornament. It produce a pleasant tinkling sound whenever the wearer moved. 'Bichhwah'[193] was shaped like a bell. Abdul Fazl refers to the following ornaments: 'Johar', having three golden rings, and they are: 'Chura' consisting of two hollow half circles, which when joined together formed a complete ring; 'Dundhani', resembling the former and 'Masuchi' which was very much like the second, but differently engraved, and 'Ghunghvu', consisting of small golden bells, on each ankle, strung upon silk cords.

Abudl Fazl has mentioned about gold anklets. But the Hindus never wore golden ornaments on the feet, because it considered as sacred, and therefore women wore it on their feet. Hindu women wore only silver (or even cheaper metal) ornaments on their feet.[197]

Ornaments in the period which we consider were made up of pearl, gold and silver, copper, ivory and glass. The poorer sections of society wore ornaments of cheap quality. Such materials were silver, brass, iron, copper, ivory glass etc.[198]

Games, Sports and Other Items:

Women enjoyed freedom of movement before the Muslims came to India. They took part in both indoor and out-door games.[199] Muslims, soon after coming here, introduced the obnoxious purdah system which the Hindus also adopted. This severely restricted their freedom. From then on they almost stopped taking part in sports and other related activities. As the Purdah System did not allow them to move outside, the women spent their leisure hours mostly in gossip and sleep. Though strict seclusion was enforced, the rich and aristocratic noblemen allowed some amount of freedom to their women, they took part in some outdoor sports activities. Some of the out-door activities in which they took part were for example, Chanugan, Sikar (Animal hunting), Animal fights, Hindola or Jhula, Jala-Keli (Jalakreeda), Chor Mahichani (or Ankh-Michayal).

Chaughan[201] which was a from of 'polo' was the game of the rich class. This game was played by Mughal princesses, the Begams and other aristocratic women. Rich Hindu women also took part in this game. In Padmavat; the heroine played chaugan with her mates. In this game, there are be two parties and in each party, there are five members. It was played, by players sitting on horse backs. Each player had a 'chaugan' which a long stick bent at the end. (Something like a hockey stick) They have to move the ball with the stick, starting from the centre of the pillers, which will have been fixed at the end of the field.[(203)]

Mughal women were very much interested in hunting and in fact had monopolized that field. They went for hunting with the Emperors. Empress Nurjahan was very interested in hunting and she more or less accompanied Jehangir (her husband) on almost all his hunting trips.[204] She was a very good shooter. When once she had gone with the Emperor for shooting, a furious tiger confronted them Emperors guards were unable to kill it. She was sitting on an elephant. Her fine presence of mind and good shooting skills, helped her to shoot down the tiger.[205] On another occasion, she had killed two tigers with four shots. Jahangir was present on that occasion. He was very pleased with her performance he presented a bracelet to her worth Rs. One thousand. There was a poet named Sayyid Ahmd. He was very impressed by her shooting skills and he composed the following couplet on her: (when translated into English, it is like this) "Though Nurjahan be in the form of a woman. In the ranks of men, she is a tiger-slayer."[206]

Various animal fights took place in the yards of the palace. Mughal women took a lot of interest and they were enjoyed it thoroughly. The important women viewed them from their apartments only.[207]

The women were interested in playing on the swings.[208]

Jala-Keli (Jalakreede) was another important item in which the women were interested. Young Hindu girls were very fond of this. They swam and enjoyed themselves in a river or a tank. 'Chor Mihhichani' was another game in which they were interested. It was an out door

game. This game is played with five or seven players. In this, the eyes of one of the players is tied with a cloth. So that she is not able to see others. Players and she is be asked to search her friends who have been hidden. If she catches any one, then the player so caught will repeat her role.

The following were some of the indoor games played by the women. Chaupur, Satrang (chess), playing cards, dice etc. of all these games, 'Chupur' was the one which was very popular and liked most. It was played by both men and women. It was played by four players. About this game Abdul Fazl says, "It is played with sixteen pieces of the same shape; but every four of them must have the same colour. The pieces all move in the same direction. The players use three dices. Four of the six sides of each side are greater than the remaining two, the four long sides being with one, two, five and six doors respectively. The players draw two sets of two parallel lines of which one set bisects the other at right angles. These parallel lines are of equal length. The smaller square which is formed by the intersection of the sets in the centre of the figure is left as it is; but the four rectangles adjoining the sides of the square are each divided into twenty four equal spaces in three rows, each of eight equal spaces."[211]

In the literary work, 'Padmavti' by Jayasi, the heroine Padmavati, insists on her husband to play 'chaupur' with her.[212] In the work 'Rasik Priya' of Keshava Das, 'Radha' plays Chaupur with her friends.[213]

Satranj (or Chess) was also a popular game. It was especially popular among the people of the upper class.

The women of Bengal were quite good at playing cards and spent much of their leisure hours at it. They played dice with their husbands, too.

Apart from indulging in the games mentioned above, royal and aristocratic women spent of their time in reading, writing, singing and dancing. Mughal women were fond of novels. Manucci writes, "Or the ladies of fund relaxation in reading books called 'Gulistan' and 'Bostan', written by Shaikh Sadi Shiraj and other books treating of live, very much the same as our romances. Only they are still more shameless."[217] Hindu women listened to the stories from their great Epics. They gave them not only recreation but also religious instructions.

There was a female superintendent in the seraglio of a Mughal Emperor. She was the superintendent for music and had a group of music players and dancers with her. Her chief task was to entertain the inmates of the seraglio at regular intervals.[218] Entertaining themselves, by lighting a good number of torches at night was one of the sources of enjoyments for the royal women. It cost a lot of money, but they did not care.[219] These lamps were lamps of oil or lamps of wax. There were many dancing recitals given by dancing-girls. Another important entertainment was the arrangement of fancy-fairs. They were also known as 'Mona Bazars.'

The fair, (Meena Bazar) was for the first time introduced and regularized by Emperor Akbar. But Kunwar Mohammad Ashraf on the authority of Gulbadan Begam's, 'Humayun Nama', holds the view, that this fancy-fair was instituted by Humayun but later on, modified and elaborated by his son Akbar.[(220)] This fair was usually held on 'Nau-Rose' (i.e. the Persian New Year's day) and its duration was usually eight days. But there not writes that the fancy-fair was for five days; whereas Todd holds that it lasted for nine days.[221] Meena Bazar was meant for The Royal and noble women and therefore no male, except the Emperor was allowed inside. The wives of the principal, 'Umrah' and 'Mansabdars' were invited to arrange the stalls.

Only lovely and beautiful women were allowed inside. They were expected to sell their goods. Manucci in this regard says, "The best piece of goods she could produce was her own body." Bernier says, "A whimsical kind of fair is sometimes held during these festivals in the Mahole or the Royal Seraglio, it is conducted by the most beautiful and engaging of the wives of Omrahs and principle Masadars. The articles exhibited are beautiful brocades, rich embroideries of the latest fashions, turbans elegantly worked on cloth of gold, fine muslins worn by women of quality and other articles of high price. The bewitching females act the part of the traders, while the purchasers are the king, the Begams, princesses and other distinguished women of the seraglio. The charm of this fair is the most ludicrous manner in which the king makes his bargains, frequently disputing for the value of a penny." Therenot also gives us a vivid account of 'Meena Bazar'[223]

In order to cater to the pleasure of the royal women, Shahjahan had appointed singing and dancing girls. In those days they were known as Kanchans. Their main duty was to entertain the king and his ladies, by singing and dancing.[224] There were a number of feasts organised from time to time and these provided good opportunities for the women to enjoy themselves and be happy. Such feasts were good sources of recreation. Public entry to these places were barred. Among the Hindus, only the wives of the Rajput Rajas were allowed.[225] For the enjoyment and entertainment of women in the country side, fairs were held in the villages also from time to time.

Religious festivals of the Hindus and the Muslims were also held from time to time to relieve the monotony of the women. There were many religious festivals and it is difficult to describe them in detail. However some important festivities are described below:

The following are some important Hindu religious festivals:

Tij, Rakhi, Dasara, Diwali or Deepavali, Vasant Panchami, Shivaratri, Holi, Rama-Navami etc. The Tij festival is observed only by women. This festival is still being observed by many women in North India, with great devotion as they believe that it would give long life to their husbands. On this day they wear their best ornaments and beautiful clothes and worship God. On this occasion especially, Rajput women (sometimes men also) wear red attire. This festival was very popular among women, especially in Rajastan.[227] This occurred in the month of Sravana (i.e. in the months of July-August). The women worship Godess Parvati on this auspicious occasion.

The festival of Rakhi[228] was held on the last day of the month of Sravana. (i.e. between July-August). On this occasion, the women tied a bracelet of silk thread with a beautifully designed pendant of threads or some other material on the wrists of their brothers. This was done as a taken of affection and as a symbolic request to look after them and protect them. They also gave their brothers some gift such as cloth or ornaments. In turn, the brothers also be give presents to their sisters.

The festival of Dasara was a very popular festival especially in North India. During this festival the people would be in the best of spirits and participate in the festival with great gaiety and fervour. This festival falls on the tenth day of Shukla Paksha in the month of Aswin (i.e. in the month of September-October). On this day people worship Goddess Durga. Durga-Puja is very popular in Bengal. Even in North India this festival is observed with great pomp and enthusiasm.

Diwali is yet another important Hindu festival. This is also called the festival of lamps. It comes on the last day of Krishna Paksha in the month of Kartik (October-November). On this day, people light a large number of lamps both in their houses and also in temples.

Vasanta - Panchami is another festival held in Magha. (i.e. in the months of Jan-Feb). It falls usually on the fifth day of Shukla Paksha in Magha. Soon after this, the festival of Shiva-Ratri comes. This usually falls on the 14th day of Phalguna (during the months of Feb-March). According to K.M. Ashraf, this festival falls on the night of 29th

of Magha. But according to Hindu calendars, it falls on the 14th day of the Krishna Paksha.[231] On this day people worship Lord Shiva.

Then comes fine festival of 'Holi' of the Hindus. It is one of the most colourful festivals. Even today it is observed with great gaiety and enthusiasm. It falls on the last day of the month of Phalguna (i.e. in the months of Feb-March). It is observed with throwing upon each other coloured water and coloured powder (known as 'Gulal')

Ram-Navami is also an important festival for the Hindus. This comes on the ninth day of Shukla-Paksha in the month of Chaitra. (March-April)

Apart from all these festivals, Rajput women observed some other festivals also which are known as Sitala, Kamadeva, Savitri-Vrata and Aranya-Shasthi.

Shitala comes on the seventh day of Chaitra. It is believed that Goddess Shitala protects the children. So, women worship her with great devotion.[234]

On the last day of spring, the festival of Kama Deva is celebrated. On this day, especially women worship Kamadeva, the God of love.[235]

Savitri Vrata comes on 29th of Vaishaka (i.e. during the months of April-May).[236] Only women observe this. It is believed that if they worship Savitri, widowhood will not come to them. A number of rites are performed under a fig tree.

Aranya Shashtri is yet another festival which is quite popular in Rajasthan. This falls on the sixth day of the month of Jeth. On this day, women go to childless forests and eat some herbs. They believe that they would beget children by doing so.[237]

There are some Muslim festivals also which give women a good opportunity to be cheerful and happy.

Nauroz [238] is a state festival which is held on the Persian New Year Day. This is a grand festival observed by all. Id (Idul-Fitr) is observed by all Muslims by continuously offering prayers. Its date depends upon the visibility of the moon.[239]

Shab-i-Barat is another festival.[240] This occurs on the 14th day of the month of Sravana.

Visiting tombs and shrines was yet another important traditional custom. The visitors spent the whole day in amusement. Hindu women also paid such visits on special occasions.

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Chapter - 8

EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Chapter - 8

WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION IN EDUCATION AND LEARNING

The Mughal emperors had a flair for culture and education. They knew that education was advancement in life, it was such they valued it much. There for the benefit of their people, they established a number of Madrasas (Schools), Maktabs and many centers of higher learning. They also established a good number of libraries throughout their land. Almost all Mughal emperors were learned. But Akbar was not a learned man. Babar and Jehangir have even written their biographies. Humayun was a lover of books and by himself a good scholar. He established a Madrasa in Delhi, which had all the facilities to teach subjects like Mathmetics, Astronomy and Geography.[1] Though Akbar was not an educated man, the encouraged scholars and had a lot of respect for them. Akbar also took pains and introduced some reforms in the primary-education system.[2] It was he, who ordered the introduction of subjects like, arithmetic, logic, mensuraton, geometry, astronomy, accountancy, public administration, accountancy and agriculture as subjects of different types of study. Prior to Akbar[3], education was largely based upon religion, but it was Akbar who gave to education a secular character. Akbar built colleges at Fetepur Sikri, Agra and at some other places[4]. There were many residential and non-residential instutions[5].

Jahangir also contributed much to the cause of education. He had made it a rule that if a person with property died without heirs, that property should be used for educational purpose[6]. Shahajahan had set up a Madrasa near Jumma Masjid of Delhi and he also provided funds for its maintenance[7]. Aurangazed was also was a patron of learning, but in his educational system more importance was given to relifions, than to secularity. He established a number of Madrasas at various places and also gave stipends and scholarships to many teachers and students. One of the famous Madrasas of his time was Madrasa Rahimiyya[8]. He had given instructions to the provincial Diwans that those who studied the Mizan and Kshahaf should be given financial help from the provincial Treasury[9].

Maintenance of libraries:

The Mughal emperors were lovers of knowledge and education so they maintained large, fine libraries. In their libraries, there were many excellent and highly rare books and manuscripts. There were also many works of translations. These libraries were centers for all people who were in quest of knowledge. Humayun had a huge library. Unfortunately, he fell from the stairs of his library and passed away.

Akbar was also fond of books and in his kibrary there were more than 24,000 books on subjects like history, philosophy, theology and science. There were also many Persian translations of many Sanskrit, Arabic and Greek works[10]. During the course of his conquests, he acquired many books from the libraries of the vanquished kingdoms and got them neatly kept in his libraries. The books that the brought

from Gujarat belonged to Itimadkhan Guvarati[11]. The Grand Imperial Library was on the side of a tower in Agra Fort.

About Akbar's Library, Abdul Fazl Says:

" It is Majesty's library is divided into several parts; some of the books are kept within, and some without the harem. Each part of the library is sub-divided, according to the value of the books and the estimation in which the sciences are held of which the books treat. Prose books, poetical works, Hindi, Persian, Greek, Kashmerian, Arabic, are also separately placed. In this order they are also inspected. Experienced people bring them daily and read them before is Majesty, who hears every book from the beginning to the end[12].

Jahangir got this fine library from his father. He was also personally very interest in books and therefore he had his own personal library also whenever he went on a journey he carried with him some selected books[13]. Shahajhan also had a large library. It is said that there were more htan 24000 books in his library[14]. This library was made bigger by Aurangazab.

Officials of library:

The libraries of the royal family-members were maintained well taking lot of care. The floors were kept clean and they were guarded well religion and Socio against dampness care was taken to see that the books were not damaged[15]. There was a good staff only to look after the libraries. In this department, the highest officer was called a 'Nazim'. He was also known as 'Mutamid'. He was given full responsibilities, he had the power to sack or appoint anybody in his

department. He was also to look after the income and expenditure of his Department[16]. Next to him was' Mutamin'[17]. His job was to look after the internal administration. He was to be a man of good experience. He was to make selection of books and he should be able to classify them and preserve them neatly. There were separate employees to clean the books and inspect them regularly. If the pages of the books were stuck together, they were required to separate them and keep the books intact properly[18]. There were separate bookbinders for each library and people with good handwriting were employed to copy some rare books. There were also artists whose job was to draw nice pictures on the margins of the pages with a view to enhance the appearance of the books[19]. Thus the Mughal libraries were well maintained, and they were the main source for knowledge-seekers and book-lovers.

In those days, society in general, and Muslim society in particular, was severely male-dominated. People never gave importance for the education of women. Therefore they never encouraged women getting education. If at all some education was given, it was limited to the women of noble families, families of the highly rich, and for royal families. Even in this case, only a few women got higher education. The rest of the women got education only up to primary school level. Ladies were being treated as much inferior to women almost always. They had to always were purdah. There was an early marriage in their cases, and soon after marriage, they were begetting children. The concept of family planning was almost unknown. All the factors together, made it very difficult for the ladies to gain any education at all.

As we have seen earlier, many Mughal emperors' wee scholars themselves and they did not give much importance to the education of women in general, they took good care in giving a good education to their daughters and also to their beloved girls in the harem. They were taught by good teachers. It is needless to say that such teachers who taught the royal ladies should be old. To the princesses and other royal ladies, they taught languages and other subjects, some good areas in the palaces had been set-aside for the purposes of coaching and study of the royal women. They could make use of the libraries and also the personal libraries of the Emperors. Many times, the princesses used to have their own small libraries. Right from Babar to Aurangazeb, many royal women have shown great interest in learning and some of them have become real scholars. Not just that, some of them have worked well for the spread and caused of Education. Some accomplished royal women have left behind them, literary works of great merits.

Learned Mughal women in the Period of Babar:

Even in the days of Babr, Mughal women took lots of interest in the field of literature and learning. Both Babar's mother and maternal aunt were well-educated women. In fact, both of them had enormous influence on Babar. It is also said that Babar had inherited many fine traits of his mother. One of Babar's daughters, Gulrukh Begam has even composed a good number of poems[20]. A few of Babar's wives were cultured and well-educated women. Babar's daughter Gulbadan Begam was a well-educated woman. She has written a biography of

her brother Humayun, this is called the 'Humayun Nama' and has become quite a famous one.

Gulbadan Begam:

She also called Princess Rose Body. She was the daughter of Babar, born to his wife Dildar Begam. Gulbadan Begam was born 1523 A.D. At that time Babar was the ruler of Kabul. She was the daughter of a man (Babar) of great strength and will power[21]. Gulbadan's childhood was spent with her father and during those days Babar ruled Kabul and parts of Hindustan. When she was a young married lady. Humayun (her brother) had to go in exit (sent out of the country). Akbar who was the nephew of Gulbadab Begam, Looked after her in her old age.

Much is not said by either Babar or Gulbadan Begam, about her mother Dil-dar Begam. When Gulbadan was a child of two years of age Gulbadan become the adopted child of Maham Begam. She was the chief wife of Babar and mother of Humayun. Humayun was eldest son of Maham Begam. After his birth, Maham gave birth to four more children, but unfortunately all of them died, Maham Begam was the chief wife of Babar and therefore she commanded maximum amount of respect. On account of his, she adopted two of Dildar's children. They were, Hindal and Gulbadan. Maham Begem fostered the two children showering affection on them in a way, which was, much more than their own mother. She imparted good education to Gulbadan and looked after her with enormous care and love[22]. In her 'Humayu Nama', Gulbadan refers lovingly and respectfully to her as her 'Dearest

Lady'.[23] After Babar's conquest of Hindustan, Gulbadan came to this new land with her father and Maham Begam[24]. Later, in the reign of Humayun, Gulbadan was given in marriage to one Khizr Khan Khawaja[25].

Babar had good literary tastes and was an intelligent man also. Gulbadan, naturally inherited these two qualities from her father. she was an educted lady and had good knowledge of both Persian and Turkish. Gulbadan Begam also had poetic talents and wrote a number of poems[26]. As they were not preserved her verses have now been lost. Only two lines have been preserved by Mir Mahadi Shivazi in his Tazkirat-uc- khwatin and its translation is given below:-

A beauty that is unfaithful to her lover, believe me, she will find life untrue to her[27].

Gulbadan was a lover of books and she had a good library of her own, there were many rare books. These had been collected from various places[28]. Nine copies were made of Bayazid's Humayun Nama (As per orders of Akabar)and one copy was given to Gulbadan[29].

This is a biography written by Gulbadan Humayun, her brother. This has been written in fine style, displaying her literary talents. In her old age, Gulbadan stayed with Akbar, her nephew. Around 1587 A.D. Akbar requested Gulbadan to write the Humayun Nama because it would be helpful in writing the Akbar Nama. Akbar Nama, was being written by Abul Fazl[30] and Akbar was interested in this. This book is a very interesting historical document because it deals with the lives of two important Mughal Emperors, Babar and Humayun. It also gives a

good amount of details regarding the relationship between these two rulers, their views and their family members. It also gives a good insight into the social and political life of not only the Emperor families, but also into the political and social life of the people of those times. The book has been written in Persian and there are a good amount of Turki words and phrases in it. Gulbadan' native language was Turki and she learnt Persian well. There is only one Persian manuscript of Gulbadan's Humayun Nama and it is now well preserved in the time of the blinding for Mirza Kamran[31].

There are no other sources, which tell us anything about 'Humayun Nama' written by Gulbadan. A.S.Beveridge says that it was not a piece of literature. It simply gives details of events and situations of that period. This book later on, was of much help in writing the Akbar Nama[32].

This is an ordinary book but it shows the intelligence and wit and humour of Gulbadan. In this regard Mr. Beveridge says:" It is not only her book which lets us know how she had a lively mind, but the fact of its composition at an age when wits are apt to be rested with domestic peace. Only a light that was strong in childhood would have burned so long to guide her unaccustomed pen after half a century of life and only a youth of happy thoughts and quick perceptions have buoyed her, still gay and vivacious, across the worries and trouble of Humayun's time"[33].

Gulbadan tells about Babar's career in detail. It also tells about Humayun's life and career in detail. A good amount of details about

the royal women the harem and their lives in the harem have been given. From her books we can know many interesting things in the period of Babar, Humayun and Akbar. In her book, Gulbadan informs us that Khanzada Begam married Shahi Begkhan or Shaibani to save her brother Babar from the wrath of Shaibani[34]. She further writs that Babar invaded Hindustan defeated five kings and an enormous amount of wealth of those kings came into the hands of Babar. Overjoyed by it, he sent costly gifts to his ladies in Kabul[35]. Then Gulbadan came to Hindustan[36]. Humayun fell ill. With some difficulty he recovered and soon after his recovery Babar passed away in a mysterious way[37]. Afterwards, Humayun came to the throne[38]. Then she tells about how one Hamida Banu Begam had not agreed to marry humayun, but later on somehow agreed and married him[39]. She then gives details about the birth of Akbar and various celebrations in connection with his bith[40].

In this way, Humayun Nama gives lot of information about the various events of that time. She writes clearly and in detail regarding her births, marriages etc. she further tells in detail, about the various moments of joy and sorrow, about festivities in the palace, and about various victories and defeats.

Learned women of (Akbar's Time):

There were many ladies who were well-educated in the period of Akbar. Akbar's mother, Hamida Banu , was fairly well-educated. Akbar's nurse Maham Anaga had lot of love for education and she helped many educational institutions. She even constructed a college (madrasah) at Delhi. It was known as khair-ul-Manzil. It also had a

mosque attached to it[41]. Akbar had educated wives also. One of his wives, Salima Sultan Begam was a lady literars flair and pursuits.

Salima Sultan Begam:

She was the daughter of Mirza-Nuru-d-din Muhammad Chanqaniani[42]. Her mother was one of Babar's daughters. She was most certainly Gul-Rukh-Begam[43]. Some sources call her Ghul-Barg Begam. Therefore she was Humayun's niece and cousin of Akbar. She was married in 1557 A.D. (H.965).to Bairam Khan-I-Khanan.Bairam Khan was murdered in year 1560 A.D(968-H). Afterwards, Akbar married Salima Sultan. She was older than Akbar. Akbar treated her well and because of this she gained respect in the palace and also in the harem. Later, she played more important roles not only the palace, but also in the political field. She was a beautiful, charming and cultured lady. She passed away in 1612 A.D.(1021 A.H)[44].

Salima Sultan Begam was an intelligent lady and she had literary talent also. She was a poetess[45] also with good literary knowledge. She was a charming and fine lady. She was recognized as a very good verse-writer of those times. She wrote her verses in Persian under the pen name of "Makhfi".[46] One of her popular verses is like this:-

(Translation): " In my passion, I called they, lack the thread of life. "I was wild and so uttered such an expression.[47]

Salima Sultan Begam had a great love for books and so she had a large collection of books.[48] She had her own library.[49] She had important collections of some rare manuscripts. In fact a rare book (manuscript)

of Duval Khazr Khan which was in the library.of Shahajahan and Aurangazeb, was once upon a time in the library of Salima Begam[50].

Thus Salima was a lady of literary talents and culture. Because of these fine qualities she gained a place amongst the important ladies of the Mughal household.

Nurjahan, the Learned Woman of Jahangir's time:

Nurjahan was the exceedingly beautiful, intelligent, educated and cultured wife of Jahangir. Her earlier name was Mehr-un-Nisa. She was the daughter of Mirza Ghiyan Beg, a Persian nobleman. He had come to Hindustan in search of employment. He came during the time of Akbar. On his way to Hindustan, his wife Asmat Banu Begam gave birth to a female child, who later became all over the world famous by the name of Nurjahan. Ghiyas Beg and his family was well-received by Akbar and he was given a good place in the administration. Akbar also paid him a good salary and this made the life of Ghiyas Beg quite easy and comfortable. Mehr-un-Nisa spent her childhood in her father's home and she gradually grew up into a beautiful, talented, cultured and educated girl. She married a perhaz youth in 1595 A.D. by the name of Ali Quli Istalju. He was employed at Akbar's Court. Mehru-un-Nisa was only seventeen years of age when she was married to Ali Quli was later known as Sher Afghan. He was given an indipendent jagir at Burdwan in Bengal and settled down there. While living there, Mehar-un-Nisa berth to a female dhild in 1597 A.D. and the child was named Ldli Begam. Kutub-ub-Dinkhan becomes the new Governer of Bengal and he was a close friend of Jahangir. In an encounter this

man had with Sher Afaghan, Sher Afghan was killed. Jahangir had known Mehr-un-Nisa even before her marriage and had taken a fancy to her because she was very beautiful. In fact sh wanted to marry her, but she was married to another man. Some historians are of the opinion that it was he who planned the killing of Sher Afghan. After the death of her husband, Mehr-un-Nisa went back to Agra, with her daughter Ladli. In the palace, she became something like a secretary to Akbar's widow Rajayya Begam Rajayya Begam looked after her very affectionately.

On the occasion of Nauroz in the year 1611 A.D. jahangir once saw Mehar-un-Nisa and was stunned by her beauty. He fell deeply in love with her.[51] About two months after first meeting her, he married her on 25th May 1611 A.D. soon after her marriage; she was called Nur Mahal (meaning Light of the Palace). He was very happy with her and dazzaled by her beauty and therefore in 1616 A.D. he gave her the title of Nur Jahan. (meaning, Light of the World)[52]. In 1622 the title of Padshn Begam (the first Lady of the Realm)was given to her[53].

By Nurjahan's marriage, her father's family became more importance. Her father etimad-ud-Daula (Also known as Ghiyas Beg) and her brother Asaf Khanwere given good position in the administration of the empire. By her intelligence, beauty and wisdom she very quickly won the heart of the Emperor and slowly began to able in administration, and in a further short period, she virtually became the ruler of the Empire, Shajahan gladly handed over much of his powers to her because he knew that she was quite capable of

courage, determination and many other humane qualities. Jehangir passed away in 1627 A.D Soon after his death, she tried her best to bring Shahriyar, the youngest son of Jhangir and her son-in-law on the throne. But she failed in her attempt. Afterwards, she retired from politics and led a quite life in Lahore. She passed away in 1645 A.D.

Nurjahan was a lady of talents. She was a highly charismatic lady with a number of achievements to her credit. Her achievements will be discussed in the coming chapters. She had a lot of literary achievements to her credit. In addition to that, she has done a lot in the field of education and learning. These achievements will be discussed her.

From her childhood, Nurjahan, (who was then known as Mehr-un-Nisa) had received a good education. Her father engaged good teachers to teach her various subjects. In addition to these teachers he also employed some Moulvis to teach her religious subjects. Even at the young age of fifteen she had a good knowledge of History and Persian classics[54]. She learnt Arabic also fairly well[55]. Thus rifht from a young age she had become an educated lady and had good literary tastes. There was a scholarly environment around her and many of her close relatives too, had poetic talents and had written a number of poems. She had a fine line of close relatives who were recognized as good poets and whose works still exist. Her grand father Muhamad Sharif (Hajri), her great uncle Quajagi Razi, his son Mirza Ahmad (he was also called Shapur), her father's brother Muhamad Tihar (also called "Wasli") and her father himself were all good poets[56]. She had a

sister named Manija Begam. Her husband Kasim Khan was considered well-known poet. He had the capacity to write poems extempore. He participated in many poetry contests that were held in the Mughal Courts and he was many times., considered the best amongst the lot.[57]

Nurjahan had a great love for poetry. She has composed many poems, which reflect he fine out of few of her subtle emotions. Her verses show her deep feelings of love, sufferings and Sufi sentiments. Kafi Khan has quoted many of her poem which show her deepest feelings and emotions58. Humour is one thing, which she cherished most. They spark off in places in her poetry quite spontaneously. She composed many poems off-hand as a sort of reply to Jahangir's poetic language and in many such poem's we can see her fine sense of humor. The following are some examples:

(These are translation):

Said Jehangir: I am not the nightingale to fill the ait with my plaintive cries; I am the moth that dies without uttering a single moan.

Narjehan replied: I am not the moth that dies an instantaneous death; I am suffer a lingering death like the candle which burns through the night without uttering a single moan[59].

Why do old men go about with their backs bent? Asked Jehangir.

"They are seeking in the dust for the days of their youth"-replied Nurjahan.[60]

Once emperor Jehangir wore a Qaba (long gown) which had ruby buttons.

Said Jehangir "Thy collar, my love, has not been dyed with saffron, engrained therein is the pallor of my face.

Nurjahan commented: And it is ruby-drops of my heart which have lent their hue to those ruby buttons on thy silken coat[61].

Jahangir Seeing the Id-moon which marks the end of Ramzan-fasting said:

The crescent of the feast is apparent at the apex of the celestial sphere.

Nurjahan responded: the crescent of the Idhas last appeared in the face of the heaven. The key of the wine-shop (tavern) has been lost and at last. It has been found[62].

Jehangir seeing tears of reunion in Nurjahan's eyes-"A pearly tear from your eye is rolling (down your cheek)

Nurjahan replied: The water I drank without you, comes forth from my eyes.[63]

Talib Amli was a poet. Incurred the wrath of Jehangir. He said to Nurjahan:

I was so embarrassed I turned into water, and water cannot be broken; so I perplexed why my honour (face-water) has been broken.

Nurjahan said to him: It (your honour) turned into ice and was shattered.[64]

Once, seeing a meteor in the sky, Nurjahan remarked: No star has ever raised its head its head so far; it is the celestial sphere, lions girded in the service to the king.[65]

Whatever may be the emotions in her poetry (such as love, joy separation, sorrow, or any other emotions) the descriptions of nature are quite predominant in her poetry. Many of her verses and love poems are very appealing.

Examples: The love has melted my body and it has become water. Any antimony that might have remained became the antimony of the bubble's eyes.

The bud may open by the morning breeze, which blows in the garden, but the key to the lock of my heart is the smile of my beloved.[66]

I do not give my heart to form until the course of action is known:

I am a slave to love and the seventy-two sects are known.[67]

Ascetic, do not cast fear of doomsday into our hearts; we have the comb to my tress, a moan comes forth from the hyacinth.[68]

When I pass through the garden in such beauty and perfection, roses, colour, aroma face or trees.[69]

We have purchased Lahore with our souls, we have given our life and bought another p[aradise.[70]

If we observe Nurjahan's poetry we can very well see her heart and talent in the field of poetry. Like Salima Sultan Begam she also wrote under the pen nama of "Makhfi".[71] By her charm, intelligence and achievements, she captivated the heart of Jehangir.[72]

Nurjahan, apart from her flair for poetry, was a lover of books and her own library.[73] She purchased the book Diwan-I-Kamran for

three Mohars. (Gold coins). The first page of this book has three lines- "Three Muhars, the price of this treasure, Nawab Nur-un-Nisa Begam."[74]

Nurjahan encouraged both learning and the learned. Because eof her patronage and love for literature, knowledge many writers and scholars eagerly came to the Mughal Court. She supparted them and helped them financially. Because of her love and in appreciation of her good work. Emperor Jahangir also gave all-round encouragement to many poets and learned men. There were many scholars who came from Persia; they were Naziri, Talib, Isfahani, Shaida, Munir Lahouri, Nishani, Saida-I Gilani, Naquib Khan, Niyamat Ullah and Abdul haq Dehlvi.[75] Nurjahan was especially very generous and kind in encouraging women weiters and poetesses. One of her personal attendants named Mehr Harwai was a poetess and her works are shrviving even today.[76]

Nurjahan was much interested in organishing seminars and competitions for poets. Such conference in her times were arranged in places like Lahore, Agra, Fetepur Sikri and also in other places.[77] These competitions were called "Mushairas " in which many famous poets from far and near competed.[78] Nurjahan was lady of may talent. She was beautiful, intelligent, well educated and a fine administrator. She was benevolent and remarkable lady in the Mughal Dynasty. She was a lady with great merits and ambition, set at the same time, she was simple and humbale.

Her epitaph reflects her great mind:

" On the tomb of us poor people there will be neither a light nor a flower, nor the wings of a moth nor the voiuce of a noghtingale. "[79]

Learned Mughal women of Shahajahan's time:

Mumtaz Mahal: her childhood name was Arjunmand Baqnu Begam. She was the daughter of Asaf Khan the brother of Nurjahan. Asaf Khan's father was etimad-nd Doula. Asaf Khan was a powerful noble man in Jahangir's court Arjunmand Banu Begam grew up to be a beautiful lady. She was educated, cultured and a lady of many talents and accomplishments. She had a good knowledge of Persian and engaged to Jahangir's third son Prince Khunrram who later on become famous as emperor Shahjahan. The marriage between Prince Khurram and Arjumand took place when he Prince Khurram (Shahjahan) was 20 years of age. When Prince Khurram ascenede the throne, he assumed the name of Emperor Shahjahan and Arjumand was given the name of Mumta Mahal. (Mumtz Mahal means Crown of the Seraglio). Mumtaz Mahal bore Shahjahan fourteen children and she died at child birth in the year 1613A.D. the 14th child was a daughter and she died given birth to that child. When Mumtaz Mahal died. Ashe was only 38 years old. As shahjanhan loved her very much he was shattered by her death. She had been his constant companion during nearly nineteen years of their married life. He immortalized his love for her by building the world-famous Taj Mahal. Mumtaz Mahal was well-known for her charitable work she had a great love for knowledge and learning and as such, she patronize the cause of learning.

Mumtaz mahal had good literary tastes. She her self has written a number of poems. Like her aunt's (Nurjahn) poems, hers were also in the form of written and clever remarks in the form of fine poetry. The following are some examples:

Complimenting his wife , the emperor remarked: "Tosee the luster of thy face, the river cometh all this way" to this Mumataz replied:

And because of the awe of the 'King of the World' (Shahjahan) it dashes its head against the stones".[80] mumtaz mahals maid-servvant had been given the job of working up the emperor every morning. One day, ny mistake, she woke him up very early. The emperor was very angry and told Mumtaz Mahal:

"The head must be chopped off".

To that, Mumtaz immediately replied:

"The head must be chooped of that bird, who hath sung before her time, for what does this fairy creature known of dusk or dawn?"[81]

Mumtaz mahal might not have written much literary works, but in short it reveals her, witty and sensible mind and also her intelligence. On the whole, she was a highly cultured and educated women

Jahanara Begam:

Princess Jahanara was the eldest daughter of Shahjanhan and Mumtaz mahal. When Mumtaz Mahal died in 1613 A.D. Hahanara was just fourteen years of age. Shahajan had enormous love for her. After the death of her mother(Mumataz Mahal). Jahanara took upon

herself. The job of looking after her father, (Emperor Shahajahan). She looked after her father with great care and dedication till the last day of his life. Shahajahan also depended upon her too much, as could not depend on his children towords the end of his life Shahajahan was dethroned and kept as captive in Agra, jahanara left the luxurious life of the palace and started living with her father in a simple way, looking after her father, cacaving serving and serving him. After the death of Sahahajahan, Jahanara was given back her oriinalofficial status. She was declared the first lady of the Royal Court by Aurangazeb. In 1666 A.D. She moved to delhi and lived ther till she passed away on 6th September 1681 A.D. she did not marry at all and died as a spinster. Aurangazeb greatly mourned her death and ordered that she should be referredto as "Sahibat-uz-Zamani (The Mistress of the Age). Princess Jahanara was a noble and a kind-hearted lady like her mother, Mumtaz Begam. She undertook many works of cjharity to help orphans, widows and other poor people.

Jahanara was a charming and intelligent girl and even in those days, the best of education was given to her, Shahajahan had appointed a Persian lady by the name of sati-un-Nisa as her teacher. She was a highly educated lady and she came from a family of scholars, she had good knowledge of Quran and Persian Prose and poetry.[82] Under her loveing care and able guidance Jahanara learnt many things she learnt Quran and was also good in the Persian language.

At a very earlyage, Jahanar started writing poems of her own. Her poems were appreciated by many for their literary merits.[83] A simple

marble grave of her even now exists near the grave of the saint Nizamuddin Aulia in Delhi.

Zeb-un-Nisa learned Women of Aurangzeb's time:

Literary contributions of Zeb-un-Nisa are worth mentioning. In 1724, after her death her scatterings are collected in a Book, Diwani-i-Makhafi. One of her writing is given below:

The only joy for the distressed and tormented heart lies in the glimpse of the Divine Beloved.

(Tr) *When thou unveil'st thy shining countenance*
Burnt are my Lashes by thy lightning glance,
And all the night, I passionately weep
While o'er my heart tempests of longing sweep;
And if see it not, desiring it,
My heart is darkened like a lamp unlit.
I have no hope, no comfort anywhere,
Caught by the faltering of thy hair.[84]
No remedy can heal the heart's distress
Except the union of thy loveliness..
Here, suffering souls, the solace that you need!
Tear not your wounds, no Longer make them bleed.[85]

All Sorrows and suffering simply melt away if the lover has but one glimpse of the Beloved. The heart tills with gratitude towards the Divine for his kindness bestowed on the lover.

From the glance Thou bestowed, O Beloved,

Flows beauty no words can express;

My life - it were little to offer in thanks

For thy bountifulness.[86]

Some of the verses are from the "Diwan-I-Makhfi" and there echo with the oneness of God. They also incorporate the ideas of Hindu and Muslim ideas.

Says Makhfi :

(Tr) Whether it be in Mecca's holiest shrine,

or in the Temple pilgrim feet have trod

Still Thou art mine.

Wherever God is worshipped is my God.[87]

O Makhfi, if the Kaaba keeper close

To Thee his door,

Complain not : though possessest even more

A holy place ;

For look into the well Beloved Face,

Over His eyes

Arches more fair than Kaaba gates arise ;

Thy heart shall blend.

Itself an archway welcoming the Friend.[88]

In the mosque I seek my idol shrine

On the Day of Judgement we should have

Had much difficulty in proving that we were

True believers, had we not brought with us

Our beloved Kafir idol as a witness.[89]

Aurangazb had very narrow ideas about religion, whereas Zeb-un-Nisa had liberal ideas about it. She believed in worshipping of one God, in one name and worshipping him in the form of the Divine Belered, For her, He is something feeling of religious harmone.

(Tr) No Muslim I

But an idolator,

I bow before the image of may Love,

And worship her ;

No Brahmin I,

My sacred thread

I cast away, for round my neck I wear,

Her plaited hair instead.[90]

Towards the end of her life, Zeb-un-Nisa had been kept in lonely confinement. Her estates had also been taken away. About her sad fate she says as follows :

I am the daughter of an Emperor, yet I have set my face towards poverty. This is what adorns my beauty, and my name is zeb-um-Nisa. (The adorner of women)[91]

Zinat-Un-Nisa was also a educated women of Aurangzen's time. She was also a poetess, but much information about her poems are not available.

Thus we can concluded that, In the Mughal age, women took great interest in the field of literature and learning.

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91. Macnico, *Poems by Indian Women,* London, 1923, p.78.



Chapter - 9

WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO ART AND ARCHITECTURE

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The Mughals were known for their flair and great liking for the arts. Amongst them were great builders, men of literature, musicians, painters, gardeners, dress designers etc. In fact you name any branch of art, there were eminent people in them in Mughals. They were great patronisers of almost all types of arts and crafts. In the field of art and architecture, their contribution is immense. Historian, R.C. Muzumdar says, " The Mughal period was not entirely an age of innovation and renaissance, but of a continuation and culmination of processes that had their beginning in the later Turko-Afghan period. In fact, the art and architecture of that period after 1526, as also of the preceding period, represent a happy mingling of Muslim and Hindu art, traditions and elements.[1]

Architecture :

The Mughal women lived in excellent palaces, houses and apartments that were specially designed and constructed to give them the maximum amount of confort with style. These apartments were of various types depending of upon the status of the Royal women many such dwellings had their own gardens, fountains and water supply systems. Some of the grand buildings which reveal the architectural beauty and splendour are as follows : Mariyam's Kothi, Tukish Sultana's apartments, Jodha Bai's Mahal ans the apartments of

other women of the harem at Fatepur Sikri, the quarters of Bilquis makani (Jahangir's mother), Nurjahan and the Bengali Mahal where the women of the various nations used to reside, at Agra Fort, the Imtiaz and Ranga Mahals of the women at Red Fort in Delhi and also from the women's apartments in Lahore Fort.

Even though the Mughal women had been given the finest dwelling units, they were involved many times in the alterations and additions of their living quarters. They supervised the construction work themselves. The excellent buildings of Haji Begam, Jodha Bai, Nurjahan, Jahanara, Rashnara, Zeb-un-Nisa and Zanat -un- Nisa exist as proof of their superior skills of building and artistic tastes.

Monuments built by Mughal Women:

During the period of Babar or Humayun, the royal women did not take interest in building structures such as palaces. Sometimes, they took interest in laying out a few gardens. The first monument in the supervision of which a royal women took some interest was Humayun's Tomb in Delhi. In the construction of this monument Humayun's widow (Haji Begam) took a lot of interest. This was in the reign of Akbar. Gulbadan calls her Bega Begam.[2] She was Humayun's cousin.[3]

The Contribution of Haji Begam in the construction of Humayun's Tomb at Delhi :

Humayun's tomb was built eight years after his death.[4] His widow, Haji Begam took a great interest in its construction. Even after the construction, she took interest in its maintenance.[5] It is one of

the first garden tombs built in India.[6] In a way, this was like a model for the building of the Taj Mahal.[7] As per Percy Brown, Humayun's tomb is not only one of the arresting examples of the building art in India, but it is also an outstanding landmark in the development of the Mughal style."[8] Humayun's tomb combines the building traditions of both Persia and India. In the opinion of Havell, it is " a Persianised version of Sher Shah's tomb."[9] It is built of Tantapura red stones and polished white Makrana marble.[10]

The construction of Humayun's tomb was started in 1560 AD and it was completed in 1573 AD.[11] It stands on a platform, the height of which is 22 feet. It is has eight arches and the main piers are inlaid with white marble.[12] The main tomb is octagonal with an across size of 47 feet and 4 inches and crowned by a dome of white marble.[13] In the rooms which are in the corners, there is the tomb of Haji Begam and either nine members of the family. All these have been laid in such a way that the whole plan of the building is a square, and the side of the square is 155 feet.[14] There is a fine garden by the side of the tomb. The building is not line the usual buildings of Akbar's era. It appears to have been planned by some one else. Ferguson says, " The most characteristic feature of the tomb is its purity. It might almost be called as 'poverty' of design.[15] Sir Sayyad Ahmad Khan's praise of the monument is like this : "If anyone has the desire to see Paradise, tell him to come and see the garden of Humayun."[16] Haji Begam also has built a 'Savari' called 'Arban Sarai'. This appears to have been built in 1560 AD and can accommodate 300 persons.[17]

Baoli of Maryam -uz- Zamani :

On the orders of Jehangir's mother Maryan-uz-Zamani Jodha Bai, a 'baoli' (stop well) was constructed. This is in Jusat Paragana and is at a distance of 1 ½ koss from Biana. There is also a garden by its side. In his memoirs, Jahangir writes : " This baoli was a grand building and has been built exceedingly well."[19] This baoli exists even now. William Finch a historian speaks of a place called Meuchapoore near Bayana. He had gone there to buy indigo and had to halt at a place. Near that place there was a 'Mahal' of the queen mother (Jahangir's mother). "It was very curiously contrived.[20] These two places were probably one and the same.

Contributions of Nurjahan Begam:

Nurjahan, the wife of Jahangir, was indescribably beautiful. She was a good and extremely well-behaved women. With such splendid qualities, within a short period she was ruling the heart of the Emperor. Not just that, she ruled the whole empire also. She was a women of many talents. She was a woman of literature, she was a poet, administrator, gardener. She knew the art of decoration, hunting and shooting. In whatever field she undertook she left her mark by doing an excellent piece of work.

The most permanent type of work that she undertook was in the field of architecture. She erected a number of buildings and monuments. She herself designed many such buildings and constructed them exceedingly well. She patronized many fine construction works also. Among them were the tomb of her father

Etimad-ud- Daula which even now exists in Agra. Her other buildings are Nur Mahal near Jallandhar, Pathar Masjid at Srinagar, the Tomb of Jehangir at Shahadara and her own tomb at Lahore.

The tomb of Estimed-ud-Daula at Agra:

Ghiyas Beg was a powerful and influential nobleman during the period of Jahangir. For his contribution and importance to the government and administration, he had been given the title of "Estimed-ud- Daula" (meaning 'pillar of government') He was the father of Nurjahan. His tomb is one of the finest buildings of Jahangir's time. It was constructed under the direct supervision of Nurjahan. It took six years (form 1622 to 1628 AD) to be built.[21]

This tomb is on the left of river Jamuna in Agra. It is in the midst of a garden and the whole area is a square surrounded by a wall. The side of the suare is 540 feet.[22] It is made up of red sand stone with gates on al sides. The tomb is at the centre of the garden and stands on a square platform, the side of which is 69 feet.[23] The tomb has two stories and there is an octagonal tower at each corner of the square and on the top of each tower there is an open balcony. The upper pavilion has a second pair of cenotaphs surrounded on each side by windows which are latticed.[24] The lower storey has a central chamber. This is in the shape of a parallelogram measuring 22 ft and 3 inches on each side.[25] In this chamber there are the main cenotaphs of Etimad-ud- Daula and his wife Asmat Banu Begam. The floor is of marble and it is beautifully decorated. There are inscriptions from Islamic Scriptures, on its wall. There are the tombs of brothers,

sisters and some other members of the family of Etimad at the corners.[26] On the main portion of the building, there are three arches. They are separated from one another by latticed lancets .[27]

The tomb appears feminine in nature. Outwardly the tomb does not appear to be big, but, it is heavily decorated. It is built entirely of white marble and throughout there is inlay work. This inlay work is called "Pietra Dura.' In the white marble there are many encrusted precious stones and the technique was similar to the one that was developed in Florence in the 16th century.[28] This ornamentation has been adopted on this tomb, was the first of its kind adopted in India.[29] The lower exterior of the tomb has geometrical patterns whereas the outer exterior and interior surfaces have been inlaid with designs of creepers, flowers, cypress, trees, grapes, vases, water jugs etc. The outer decoration is so exquisitely beautiful that the whole tomb appears like a casket inlaid with precious stones.[30] The construction of this tomb was a very costly affair. According to De Laet this tomb might have cost more than 10 million rupees (In those days). According to Pelsaert, when the tomb was not yet complete, it had already cost 35000 rupees.[31] Still a lot of work had yet to be done. The expenditure of which might cost another 1000000 rupees more.[32] At one time, Nurjahan had thought of building this tomb purely of silver. But she was advised buildings of that silver abandoned could withstand the vagaries of the weather, therefore, she that idea and instead of silver, she used good quality of white marble. Marble, naturally could withstand the weather conditions much better. It is

said that the entire expenses for this was met by Nurjahan's treasury.[33]

The tomb of Etimad- ud-Daula was a new kind. It marked the transition between Indianised red stand-stone and marble constructions of Akbar and Jahangir.[34] In many ways, its designs have been adopted in building the Tajmahal,[35] which was a later construction. The whole structure of this provided a model for Jahangir's tomb at Shahadara, Lahore.[36] About this monument, Percy Brown speaks highly as follows :

"There is no other building like it in the entire range of Moghal architecture, the delicacy of treatment and the chaste quality of its decoration placing it in a class by itself."[37]

Nur Mahal Sarai, Jallandhar.

In the period of Mughals, there was all-round development in every field. Economy was also on the upswing. The growth of trade and commerce made it necessary to construct road networks. They connected important commercial centres. By the side of the roads trees were planted to give shade to the people. Wells were dug at various places and rest houses were provided along the roads at frequent intervals. These were called 'Sarais' Mughal women also took interest in these constructional activities.

'Nur Mahal Sarai' is a good example of such activities. This Sarai was constructed by Nurjahan, near Jallandhar. It was built around the year 1620 AD Nurjahan bore the entire expenses.[38] It is situated at a distance of 15 kms to the south of Jallandhar, 40 Kms south east

of Sultanpur.[39] The Sarai has been built on a site of 551 sq. ft. area. There were octagonal towers at the corners. There is a gateway called Lahore Gate and it is to the west. It is built in red sand stone. There is a lot of ornamentation in the front. On the panel there are figures of angels, lotuses, nymphs, lions, elephants, birds, peacocks, men on horse backs etc. These figures many times represented the lives of Mughal Emperors, like scenes of elephant fight etc.[40] At the entrance of the gate way and above it, there is the following inscription.

1. During the just rule of Jahangir Shah, son of Akbar Shah, whose like neither heaven nor earth remembers.
2. The Nur Saray was founded in the district of Phalor by command of that angel, NurJahan Begam.
3. The poet happily discovered this date of its foundation: This saray was erected by Nurjahan Begam in 1028.
4. Knowledge of the date of its completion was found in the words : " This Saray was erected by Nurjahan Begam in 1030."[41]

Inside the Sara;y area there were many rooms. There was a luxurious apartment for the Emperor and there were many smaller rooms also. In its compound there was also a mosque. About this, in his memoirs Jahangir says:

I took up my quarters at Nur Saray. At this spot the vakils of Nurjahan Begam had built a lofty house and made a royal garden. It was now completed on this account the Begam, having begged for an entertainment, prepared a grand feast, and by way of offering, with

great pains produced all kinds of delicate and rare things. In order to please her I took what I approved. I halted two days at this place.[42]

In his memoirs, he mentions this place at other times also.[43] In those days, this sarai 'Noor Mahal' was quite famous and was known as a spacious and an important building.[44]

Nur Mahal Serai at Agra:

Nurjahan also constructed another serai near Agra. This is in the district of Nur Mahal.[45] Peter Mundy, a foreign tourist had halted in this serai on 6th August 1632 AD About this serai he syas, " It is a fair one, built by the old queen Nur Mahal for the accommodation of travelers."[46] Mundy has stated that it had the capacity to hold 2500 people and five hundred horses.[47] It was completely made up of stones. There was not even a small piece of timber in it. The rooms were all arched with and each has copulans."[48] It was situated between two gardens which were also designed by her According to Sir Richard Carnac Temple, one of these gardens was the Moti Bagh and the other was Nawab Ganj and this had been built during the time of Shahjahan.[49]

Pathar Masjid (Stone Mosque) at Srinagar:

This Pathar Masjid was constructed by Nur Jahan.[50] This is also called the Shahi Masjid (Koyal Mosque) or Nau Masjid (New mosque). It was constructed of grey lime stone and in the front there are nine arches. The central arch is bigger than the other arches.[51] It seems to have never been used for the purpose of prayers. the reason

it was used for prayers was because, it was supervised during construction by a woman. It was used to store articles.[52]

Jahangir's Tomb, at Shahadara Lahore :

Nurjahan has designed and supervised the constraction of this tomb.[53] It is at a distance of 6 miles in the direction of North West from Lahroe. It is in the Dilkush Garden in which Nurjahan played during her younger days. It is now called Shahdara.[54] The plan of this tomb was similar to the plans of the tombs of Etimad-ud-Daula at Agra.[55] and that of Akbar at Sikandra (near Agra).[56]

There is an outer Sarai and alcoves round the wall in order to provide shelter for travelers. There is a tall gateway at the entrance.[57] There are gateways on all the four sides. This mausoleum stands on a low plinth. The plinth is square in shape and each side of the square is 256 feet. Above the roof there are minarets which are octagonal in shape Around it there were arcades and at the centre there was a door way. On each side of the door way, there are five arches.[58] The stone coffin is made up of white marble. On it, there is the pietra Dura in-lay work and the coffin is placed in an octagonal chamber.[59] There was a fine marble parapet. This was carried off by Ranjit Singh, but some how it was later to its rightful place restored.[60] Ranjit Singh ruined the tomb to a great extent and took away the marble for his own use.[61] There is no dome. It is not known clearly whether it has been re-built or whether it was destroyed.[62] Round the base there are beautiful designs; such designs are found in Kashmir.[63] This

building is made up of red sand-stone and on those stones there is beautiful in-lay work of white marble.

Tomb of Nurjahan at Lahore:

Nurjahan constructed many grand tombs by personally supervising them. But her own tomb is a fairly simple one. Jahangir died in 1627 AD and soon after, Nurjahan went to Lahore and lived a simple life. She passed away in 1648 Ad. She was buried at Shahdara, on the banks of the river Ravi, fairly close to the tomb of her husband, Jahangir.

Nurjahan's tomb is built on a square platform at the centre of Charbagh. This Charbagh has got boundary walls. The original garden does not exist at all. In the original garden, there were canals, tanks, water falls, fountains, cypress trees, tulips, roses, jasmine, fruit trees and date palms.[64] Nurjahan's tomb has great similarities with the tombs of her father (Estimad-ud- Daula) and her husband (Jahangir). It is square in shape and has seven arches on each side. In the interior there are arches and galleries. At the centre there is a square room, and in its centre, the cenotaphs of Nurjahan and her daughter, Ladli Begam. It has been placed on a platform.[65] It had very beautiful decorations, but much of it was destroyed in the great cycle of time. Some portions which had been destroyed have been reconstructed with red stones in which there are an artistic inlay of marble.[66] In the interior, only pointed designs remain how. Much of the marble inlay work has been destroyed.

In the case of Nurjahan's tomb we do not clearly know how it was intended to be in the beginning. But the whole structure appears to be simple and humble reflecting the same qualities of its occupant.[67] The epitaph Says:

Upon my grave when I shall die,

No lamps shall burn nor jasmine lie,

No candle, with unsteady flame,

Serve as a reminder of my fame

No bulbul chanting overhead

Shall tell the world that I am dead[68]

Contributions of Jahanara Begam:

Akbarbadi Mahal, Fatepuri Mahal, and Sarhindi Begam, were the secondary wives of Emperor Shahjahan. They all built mosques. Akbarbadi Mahal constructed the Akbarbadi Mosque. But unfortunately, this has been destroyed by the British in the year 1857. Fatepuri Mahal had constructed a mosque in Chandini Chowk of Delhi. This was called the Fatepuri Mahal. Sirhindi Begam had also constructed a mosque which was called the Sirhindi Mosque. This is at Lahori Gate, near Khari Baoli Bazaar in Delhi. Akbarbadi Mahal had also constructed two-stepped wells (Baoli) and also a sarai.[69] But so far as the construction of buildings is concerned, some real contributions have been made by the daughters of Shahjahan, Jahanara and Roshanara.

Both the above mentioned daughters were very much involved in the constructional activities. They have left behind them some fine monuments which they constructed. Jahanara built her own masolem in a grand way. But that was not the only interest she had. She constructed a number of gardens, palaces, mosques, sarais, monasteries and market places.[70]

Mosques :

Princess Jahanara was popularly known as Begam Saheb. She built a beautiful mosque from her own money in Kashmir. In those days, it cost Rs.40000/- This was specially built because of a learned man called Mulla Shah Badakshani. On its completion a valuable diamond was also presented to him on behalf of Jahanara.[71] Around this mosque, there were a number buildings meant to give shelter to the needy.[72] These were constructed at a cost of another 20000 rupees. This has been mentioned by Kafi Khan.[73] Jahanara also built another Masjid in Agra and this also was built from her personal money.[74] It is situated outside the Agra Fort and is in the North Western direction. It took five years to build and it was completed in 1648 AD In those days, it cost five lakhs of rupees. It is a structure of fine design and excellent proportions. Princess Jahanara wanted to make her fame inamertal with this fine structure.[75] Once upon a time Shahjahan was also interested in constructing the same mosque. But later on, he allowed Jahanara to construct it. Jahanara constructed a monastry (Rabat) also.[76] Jahanara was a pious and religious women therefore, she constructed a number of religious buildings.

Caravansarais and Market places :

Jahanara was interested in the development of trade and commerce and, therefore, she built a number of rest houses (caravan sarais) along important commercial routes. She also built some markets. Jahanara was respectfully called Begam Saheb.[77] Foreign travelers like Manucci, Bernier and There not have written about her constructional activities. A fine caravanserai was built in Delhi. It had a five garden and a reservoir within. Describing this, Bernier writes as follows : The Caravanasarai is in the form of a large square with arcades, like oür palace Royale, except that the arches are separated from each other by partitions and have small chambers at their inner extremities. Above the arcades run a gallery all round the building into which open the some number of chambers as there are below.[78]

Enough precautions were taken in regard to the safety of the travelers. Gates were ordered to be closed at night. These Carvansarais were largely constructed for the sake of rich Persian, Uzbek and other Foreign merchants.[79] This Begam sarai was destroyed after the Sepoy Mutiny.[80]

The Chowk Sarai Bazaar at Lahore has also been planned and constructed by Jahanara.[81] The famous Chandani Chowk Bazaar in Delhi has also been planned and built by Jahanara. This Chandani Chowk area is even now a thriving commercial area in Delhi.[82]

The Tomb of Jahanara :

Jahanara's tomb is at the shrine of Sufi saint Nizamuddin Aulia in Delhi. Her tomb is a simple structure. It is artistic and reveals her

values of life.[83] The grave is of marble and is open on the top. Grass has grown in the hollow open top portion. She wanted it to be that way. There is only one simple ornamentation and that is in the form of a lily carved out of precious jade (which is green in colour). Except for this, there is no other ornamentation on the grave.[84]

Tomb of Roshanara Begam, at Delhi:

Roshanara Begam was another daughter of Shahjahan. She designed her own tomb. There is a garden by its side. This tomb is in the north western portion of Delhi. This mansoleum is beautiful too, and has been made of white marble. There are very beautiful ornamentations on the exterior parts of it. It stands on a platform which is low and wide, which bears her name.[85]

It is said that another daughter of Shahjahan called Purhunar Banu Begam was buried in a mausoleum built under the supervision of Roshanara. But which of the daughters of Shahjahan bore this name is not clear of brown.

Tomb of Zeb-un-Nisa Begam:

Nawab Bai was one of the wives of Aurangzeb. She had three children called Muhamad Sultan, Muhammad Muazzam and Badr-un-Nisa, Nawab Bai has built a sarai at Fardapur and also laid out a colony named Baijipura near the city fo Aurangabad.[86] But the two daughters of Aurangzeb named Zeb-un-Nisa and Zinat-un-Nisa made fine contributions in the field of Architecture.

Zeb-un-Nisa built a number of gardens and amongs them, the important gardens are Char Buriji and Nawan Kot-in Lahore. It was

in Nawan Kot that she was buried.[87] Her tomb is on marble with fine pinnacle of gold on it. But Judanath Sircar says that she was buried in a garden of thirty thousand trees, which is just out side Kabuli Gate.[88] After sometime, her tomb was demolished for the purposes of constructing a railway line. Her coffin and the inscribed tomb stone are now in Akbar's mausoleum at Sikandra.[89]

Contributions of Zinat-un-Nisa :

Zinat-un-Nisa, the second daughter of Aurangzeb, also contributed substantially in the field of Architecture. She built fourteen caravansarais.[90] When she was thirty seven years of age, she undertook a project to construct a number of inns for the benefit of the travelers along the highway of Oudh and Bengal. Her father appreciated this effort.[91] These were the caravansarais constructed by her.

She also constructed an excellent mosque Zinat -ul-Masjid in Delhi, at her own expenses.[92] After her death, she was buried here. Her grave was later removed to some other spot when the British occupied the building.[93] It is said that Zinat demanded her dowry money from her father and from that money she built this Mosque.[94]

Mughal Monuments inspired by Mughal Women :

Now let us look at some of the fine monuments that were built because of great love towards some Mughal women. Jahangir built an excellent mausoleum for his beloved Anarkali at Lahore. In Allahabad, he built a tomb and a garden for one of his queens Shaw Begam (mother of Khusran). But the finest monument that was ever

built was the famous Taj Mahal built by Shahjahan in memory of his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal. This is one of the finest monuments that has ever been built to perpetuate the greatest love between Spouces.

The Great Taj Mahal at Agra:

Mumtaz Mahal, the wife of Shahjahan, went to her heavenly abode in 1631 AD. She gave birth to fourteen children and passed away at an early age. After her death, Shahjahan felt as if the light of his life and gone. His grief knew no bounds and he lost interest in almost everything, including his own life. She had loved him deeply and she was a true partner of his life in all his moments of joys and sorrows. So, after her death, he became like a paralysed man and even stoped attending to his normal duties as an Emperor. He thought of a building a ground Mansoleum, the like of which, perhaps the world had never seen and thereby he wanted make his love eternal and immortal. He wanted to construct the greatest resting-place to his most beloved queen . Thus, a grand concept of building the great TajMahal took shape in his mind. For this purpose, suitable lawns towards south of Agra and on the bank of the river Jamuna was selected. The land belonged to Raja Man Singh[95] which later became the property of his grand son Raja Jai Singh. This land was acquired to build the grand Taj Mahal.[96]

The Taj Mahal is called the ' Venus-de-Milo' of the East. It took twenty years to build it. (From 1632 to 1652). 20000 labourers toiled in the construction of this monument. Some sources estimate that nine crores and seventeen lakhs of rupees were spent on it.[97] The

work was under the supervision of Mukarramat Khan and Mir Abdul Karim.[98] Its chief architect was Ustad Isa. Materials and workers required for this grand edifice were brought from far-off places such as Qandahar, Ceylon, the Nile, the Sea of Ormuz, Basra, Yamen, Persia and other countries.

The entire mausoleum is placed in a rectangular area of 1900 ft by 1000ft[99]. There is a surrounding wall on sides except on the side facing the river. There are octagonal turrets. On the three sides, there are similar gateways. But only the gateway in the south is now operational. The entrance way is made up of red stones with exquisite inlay work of marble. On the frame of the central room there is some Quranic inscription in black against white marble (as background). As one crosses the main gateway, one has to descend some steps and soon after is led into a garden. It is square in shape and each side is 1000 feet long. Its area is approximately forty two acres. There is a mosque on the western side of the mausoleum.

Here, the main tomb stands at the northern end of the garden and not in the middle of the garden as is done in most of the cases. The main tomb stands on a marble platform and at the centre of the platform.

The beauty and grandeour of Taj Mahal is simply imdescribable. It is graceful, delicate and serene. The various details of this grand structure are in perfect proportion, and each matches with the other perfectly and in great harmony. It is made with the costliest of

materials. Even then it has its own majestic simplicity. It was intended to be the greatest love monument on earth and in fact, it is one.

The Mughal Gardens : The Mughal rulers and their royal women were very interested in building grand structures. They were also interested in laying various kind of beautiful gardens around or by the side of those great buildings. From time immemorial, India has been famous for its rich flora and fauna. In the social and religious lives of the people, flowers have always played important roles. Flowers are an absolute must in the social and religious life of the people. There were many gardens in the country much before the Mughals came to India. But they were not systematic and well-organised.[101] But the beautiful layout and the art of constructing and developing the gardens in a scientific and systematic way has come from the regions of central Asia. In the period of the Mughals, this art of the gardening grew to its zenith.[102]

The Mughals had their own new and fine ideas about gardening. The styles that were prevalent at that time in Persia (modern Iran) and Turkistan were something like this : In the garden there used to be a systematic layout of artificial irrigation channels, tanks and mini waterfalls. There used to be a series of terraces, usually eight, corresponding to eight divisions of Quranic sometimes, there used to be only seven tearaces. On sloping ground, the seven terraces symboliz the seven planets. The main pavilion was generally built on the topmost terrace, mainly with a view to have a good look at the whole scenery. Sometimes it was built at the bottom also.[103] When the Mughals came to India, they quickly developed the art of

gardening. There were special arrangements for the supply of water and because of the assured water supply, many new varieties of shrubs, fruits and vegetables were introduced and flourished well.[104] After Akbar's marriage with the Rajput princess of Amber, Jodha Bai (who was later renamed as (Mariam-uz-Zamani), the Hindu influence on gardening began to slowly creep in.[105]

Famous flowers and trees : the following were some of the famous flowers of those days : Banafsha, Yasaman, and Nasarin. These were flowers of foreign origin which were introduced in India. They were from Persia. The other types of flowers such as Baila, Kevra, Champa, Molsiri, Sevtn, Damra, Karma and Laung were of Indian origin.[106] Some Indian flowers were given Persian names such as Gul-i-Kauza, Gul-i- Sadbarg and Qaranful of Laung.[107] In the Mughal gardens, there were trees bearing many kinds of fruits. Among the most famous trees were Mangoes, apples, bananas, grapes, oranges, pomegranates, apricots, almonds and many other types.[108] Some trees such as Sarv,[109] cypress and Chinar trees had been planted though they did not bear fruits. They were planted and raised mainly for the purposes of ornamentation.[110] Some such trees exist even today.

Mughal gardens were geometrically laid in symmetrical and systematic patterns. Many times, these were accompanied by beautiful buildings, artifical lakes, fountains, wells, reservoirs, aqueducts, bath houses with hot water and many other amenities which enhanced the beauty of the gardens.

In this connection Edward Terry writes :

For places of pleasure they have curious gardens, planted with fruitful trees and delightful flowers, to which nature lends such a supply as that they seem never to fade. In these places they have pleasant fountains to bathe in and other delights by sundy conveyances of water, whose silent murmur helps to lay their senses with the bonds of sleeps in the hot seasons of the day.[111]

These gardens generally has three enclosures in series, that is one after the other. The first enclosure was for selected public members. This was called the Diwani-i-Am. The second enclosure was for the Emperor and for dignitaries and other important people. (Diwan-i-Khas). The third and the last enclosure was called the Purdah Garden, which was reserved for the Empress and her women in waiting or head maidens.[112]

The Mughals a took lot of care to choose the sites for the gardens. Most of the gardens they laid were in Kashmir, Lahore, Kabul, Agra and Delhi. Jahangir constructed many gardens in Kashmir Both Jahangir and Nur Jahan had enormous love for Kashmir. In his memoirs Jahangir writes : "Kashmir is a garden of eternal springs or an iron fort to the palace of kings. It is a delightful flower-bed, and a heart expanding heritage for dervishes."[113]

Some famous Mughal Gardens : There were many famous Mughal gardens in Kashmir. Some of them are the Shalimar Bagh, Nishat Bag, Achabal, Verang, Davaga Bagh (Lalla Rook's garden), Bagh-i-Bahar area and Nur Afza Garden near the Dal Lake. In Agra also there are

some fine gardens. They are : Ram Bagh, Dehra Bagh, Zahara Bagh (Nur Manzil Garden), Taj Mahal Garden, the garden of Etimad-ud-Daula's tomb, and Moti Bagh. Some of the famous Mughal gardens of Lahore are, Shalimar Bagh, Shahadara, the Badshahi Mosque Garden, Chow Burji Bagh and Nawab Kot Bagh. In Allahabad also there are gardens such as Wah Bagh, and Hassan Abdalin Ravalpindi Khusru Bagh. Apart for these, the Lake Palaces Garden in Udaipur, Humayun's Tomb garden and Shalimar Bagh in Delhi are quite famous.

These gardens were used for a number of purposes. They were pleasure spots for the Emperors and also for the royal women. Sometimes they were used as holiday and relaxation spots for high dignitaries. Feassts and parties were also held there. Nurjahan once had given a grand feast in the Nur Sarai garden when Jehangir had come there. She had also given a grand feast in Nur Afshan garden.[114] Gardens were also laid out by the side of the tombs of some important personalities. The best examples of this type are gardens by the side of the tombs of Etimad-ud-Daul and Mumtaz Mahal. (Garden by the side of the famous Taj Mahal).[115] There were also fine gardens called Shahdara Gardens. Humayun's Tomb Garden and Roshnara Gardens at Delhi. Gardens were used for other purposes also. For example, Aurangzeb was crowned hurriedly in Shalimar Gardens, after he deposed his father Shahjahan. Later on, his official coronation took place in a grand manner at Red Fort in Delhi.[116]

Mughal women right from the days of Baber, took lot of interest in the laying of gardens at various appropriate places, Many times

they took active interest in them and supervised them personally. They also employed very able hands for both the jobs of construction and maintenance. Sometimes beautiful gardens were given as gifts by the Emperors to their women.

The Gardens of Kabul:

During the Mughal times there were many gardens which belonged to Mughal women. Gul Badan Begam in her 'Humayun Nama' and Jehangir in his memoirs write about the gardens in Babul. Bega Begam or Bika Begam has some gardens in Kabul. She was the grand mother of Akbar. Acording to A.S. Baveridge, Bibi Mubarika is probably this Bega Begam.[117] It is she who had carried Baber's bones to Kabul.[118] Other royal women such as Shahr Banu Begam daughter of Mirza Abu Sa'id and Baber's aunt, Hamida Banu Begam (Jahangir's grand mother and Akbar's mother) also had their own gardens in Kabul. The circumcision ceremony of Akbar took place in Kabul when he was five years old. A grand function to celebrate this event was held in the garden of Bega Begam.[119]

Regarding the gardens in Kabul, Jahangir writes as follows in his memoirs:

First of all I walked around Shahrara(city adoring) then the Mehtab (moon light) garden and then the garden that Bika Begam (Bega Begam). Grand mother of my father had made. Then a garden that Maryam Makani, my own mother had prepared The Shahr Ara garden was made by Shahr Banu Begam, daughter of Mirza Abut Said, who was the aunt of the late King Babar. From time to time, it

had been added to and threre is not a garden like it for sweetness like Kabul - While I was at Kabul I had several entertainments in the Shahr-Ara garden, Sometimes with my intimates and courtiers and sometimes with the women of the harem.[120]

Dehra Bagh and Zahara Bagh of Agra:

Both Dehra Bagh and Zahara Bagh were owned by Babar's daughters.[121] Zahara Bagh was constructed for Babar's daughter Zahara. This was one of the largest palace gardens in Agra. This was between Ram Bagh and the site of Chini ka Roza.[122] It has a big octagonal well. This was in existence even up to 1912.[123]

Garden at the Tomb of Humayun in Delhi :

This garden was one of the earliest gardens laid out by the Mughals. It was built by Haji Begam, one of Humayun's widows. Garden-tombs of those times were constructed even while they were alive. When they were alive, they were used for their recreational purposes. On the death of the person, the central portion was the mausoleum and the whole site was put in charge of holy men.[124] The surrounding of the tomb was planned during Humayun's life time. This is one of the gardens which exists even today without appreciable modifications and alterations.[125] It is the Char Bagh pattern. There aer tanks are channels around it. In the construction of them, small differences in levels have been purposely made in order to have a pleasing and enchanting effect of ripples of water. There were big wells out side the gardens to supply water.[126] Most of the flowers and trees

of those times are not in existence now. From whatever that exist now, we can very well imagine the grandeur and glory of those times.

The Garden of Maryam-uz- Zamani :

Maryam was the mother of Jehangir. She ordered that a garden should be laid in Paragana of Jusat, at a distance of 1 ½ koss from Biana. She also ordered the construction of a Baoli (step well). It cost Rs. 20000/- in those days.[127] Regarding it, Jehangir writes as follows : The Baoli (step well) was a grand building and has been built exceedingly well.[128] The garden is not in existence now, but the Baoli is still there.[129] William Finch says that he went to a place called Menhapoore near Bayana. He says that he had stayed in a sarai where there was a garden and a summer-house belonging to the Queen Mother (Jahangir's mother). He further says that it had been 'quriously contrived.' The two places were perhaps, one and the same.[130]

The Gardens of Nur Jahan :

Nurjahan was the last wife of Emperor Jahangir. She had a great interest in arts and also in the construction of gardens. She was the one who inspired the Mughal gardens.[131] Villiers Stuart calls Nurjahan " The greatest garden-lover of them all".[132]

Kashmir Valley was a wonderful place with enormous natural beauty. This was an ideal place in the eyes of Jahangir and Nurjahan to construct gardens. There were enormous amounts of flowers and fruits. As the country is hilly and has enough of natural water-resources, it was an ideal place to lay out well-planned terraced

gardens. It was known for its snow capped mountains, deep valleys, variety of fruits and flowers.[133] It was rightly called a 'Paradise on earth.'

Mughal women were fond of visiting Kashmir every now and then. The frequency of visits to Kashmir increased especially after the period of Jehangir. Their love for Kashmir, made them plan at many gardens in Kashmir. Kashmir is known for its cool climate in summer. So, especially in summer, the Mughals and the royal women rushed to Kashmir in summer to avoid the intense heat of Delhi, Agra etc Such visits not only provided recreation but also improved the health of those who visited Kashmir.

Shalar Bagh and Dal Lake of Kashmir :

Jehangir and Nurjahan built many gardens. Out of all those gardens, the Shalimar Bagh is the most famous one. This is constructed on the Hindu ground of Pravarasena II.[134]

About this, Jahangir says : In these two or three days, I frequently embarked in a boat, and was delighted to go round and look at the flowers of Phak and Shalamar. Shalamar is near the lake. It has a pleasant stream, which comes down form the hills, and flows into the Dal Lake. I bade my son Khurram to dam it up and make a water fall, which it would be a pleasure to behold". This place is one of the best sights in Kashmir.[135] Emperor Shahjahan was largely responsible for the fine black marble work.[136] That has been constructed in the pavilions. Its design, ornamentations and layouts owe much to the intelligence and superior tastes of Empress

Nurjahan.[137] The overall design is a testimony to her artistic sense and innovations.[138] According to Bernier it, (shahmar Bagh) is the most admirable garden of al the gardens of the Emperor . About it, he gives the following description.[139]

The Shalamar Bagh is divided into three main areas : an outer or public garden containing the grand canal extending form the lake to the first large partition, the Diwani-i-Am to the Diwan-i- Khas and the royal bath-houses (Hammam) to an upper wall with the small guardrooms at each end and lastly the inner garden for the women of the harem, which had a large black marble pavilion and elaborate water-works set in and across it.[140] The Zenana Gardens was in the Charbagh style. It was the central point from where the four vistas opened. The garden on the whole is simple in design with all the trees, canals and buildings matched with each other giving an unerring sense of proportion. The mountains behind form an apt background for the Shalamar.[141]

Elson Banks findly says that Nurjahan's contribution in the design of the garden can be clearly seen. It has been divided into individual terraces which serve different functions. It is made that it is not just a place for pleasure, but it also serves as a place of work (something like an office).[142] The Zenana was a place which showed the transformation of women. It was a place where women could easily exchange their ideas and have formed ways of bettering their lots.[143] The Shalamar Bagh was called Farah Baksh (meaning the bestower of joy) in the Mughal days.[144] Shalamar means "Abode of

love". It had that name from the 6th century AD. When it was first built as a house by Pravarasena II.[145]

Achabal- Kashmir :

Achabal is a place which is 8 kms to the south of Srinagar. It is a beautiful spot with lots of flowers, plants and springs. Here, a beautiful garden was loud out by Jehangir and Nurjahan. Once upon a time Achabal was called Begamabad because it had been planned and constructed by Nurjahan.[146] Villiars Stuart calls it an ideal state" and further adds. " If I were aksed where the most perfect modern garden on a medium scale could be devised, I should answer without hesitation, Achabal". [147] This is around a water-fall which rises out of Sosanwar Hill[148]. On both the sides of the water-fall there are small summer-houses. Below it, there are wide pools with fountains. Below it, water flows down the length of the garden and ultimately falls away.[149] Much earlier, Achabal was a Hindu place of worship known as Akshawala.[150] About Achabal, Peter Mundy writes as follows : The garden is very handsome. It is laid out in regular walks and full of fruit trees- apple, pear, plum, apricot and cherry. The water-fall produced the finest effect imaginable, especially at night, when innumerable lamps fixed in parts of the wall adapted for that purpose, are lighted under the sheet of water.[151]

Akbar visited this place a number of times. For him, a visit to Achabal was not only a source of delight, but like a religious duty also.[152] Jehangir and Nurjahan were also very fond of this place and they visited it quite often.[153] Emperor Jahangir considered it a piece of

Paradise.[154] Bernier says that the water supply there was quite huge, and he further adds that a fountain which was there may be called a small stream rather than a fountain.[155]

Vernag, Kashmir :

Both Emperor Jahangir and Nurjahan liked this place very much. It is to the south east of Srinagar and on the way to Banihal Pass. Before the Mughals came to India, this place was a Hindu religious-place. It was a very secluded place, in a remote corner. It was full of natural beauty and had a unique charm of and serenity calm. It was the favorite place of Jahangir and Nurjahan. The Kashmir people worship snakes.[156] The name Vernag has come form there. About this, Jahangir writes as follows : "The source of Bihat is a spring in Kashmir called the Vir Nagi in the language of India a snake is Virnag. Clearly, there has been large snakes in that place.[156]

About the flora and fauna in Virnag, Jahangir writes : " Of the trimness of the canal and the verdure of the grass that grew below the fountain, what can one write? Various sorts of plants, and sweet smelling herbs grew there in profusion, and among them was seen a stem, which had exactly the appearance of the variegated tail of a peacock. It waved about the ripple and bore flowers here and there.[157]

About Verang Bernier says, "In one of its ponds there are fishes that come when they are called and when you cast bread to them, the biggest where of have golden rings in their noses with inscriptions about them, which say that renowned Nour Mehalle, the wife of Jehan

-Guire, the grand father of Aurangzeb, caused it to be fastened in them". [158]

On the whole, Verang was a highly enchanting and captivating place. Jehangir syas, " In the whole of Kashmir there is no sight of such beauty and enchanting character" [159].

The Nur Afza Garden, Hari Prabat Fort, Dal Lake- Kashmir :

Inside the fort of the palace there is a hill known as Hari Prabhat Hill. This is to the west of Dal lake Which was built by Akbar. There is a small garden and inside it there is a small building. When Jahangir and Nurjahan first visited this place, they found them to be almost in ruins. As he was interested in them, with Mutamid Khan, he made sincere efforts to put them in order.[160] When the Emperor took interest, it seen became a beautiful place. A big terrace was added and paintings and beautiful pictures were hung at suitable places.[161] There were many useful trees in Nur Afza Garden. To supply the required quantity of water, Jahangir constructed a suitable canal system.[162] After the repair works of the garden, it was given the new name of Nur Afza (meaning Iincrease in light),[163] because Nurjahan had taken a lot of interest in its renovation. She became a patron for this new garden.[164]

Bagh-i-Bahar Ara, Dal Lake Kashmir :

Bagh-I-Bahar Ara is situated at Sadurkhun, which is on the western side of Dal Lake. It has been laid down by Nurjahan in 1623AD It does not exist in its totality. It had two terraces, one approaching the lake and the other at a higher level than the first

one.[165] The scenic beauty from both the terraces is grand and memorable.[166] These terraces had been constructed in the Cachar Chenar pattern.[167] These terraces had for Chanar trees planted evenly over a squre plot so that the shade of the trees falls during the day.[168] From the river Indus, suitable canals were constructed in order to supply water to the garden. The canal was named as Suid Canal[169,170]

Daroga Bagh (Lalla Rookh's Garden), Manasbal Lake, Kashmir. This was perhaps specially built for Nurjahan. The whole garden is on terraced walls and there were many popular trees[171] It is amidst calm waters and is a protection to floods[172,173]

Shahadara, Lahore :

Lahore was the capital city for Jahangir and Nurjahan. It was the favorite place of the royal couple. Here also, Nurjahan laid many gardens along the river Ravi. Nurjahan's famous garden was Dilkush Garden. This is to the North west of Lahore and is about five miles from the city. Dilkush garden means garden of delight. This garden was later named as Shahdara. Jahangir had expressed his desire that after his death, he should be buried in Vernag in Kashmir. But that did not happen. He was instead, buried in Dilkush Bagh.[174] Nurjahan had designed Jahangir's tomb on the model of the tomb of her father Etimad-ud-Daula. (Nurjahan's mohter's tomb was also similar to the tomb of her father) Etimad's tomb is in Agra.[175]

The entrance to Shahadara Gardens is through the courtyard of a serai. There is a tall gateway through which one has to go to reach the inner tomb. It is a big one and square in size. Each side of the

square is about 540 yards. The total area is about 60 acres.[178] In the garden there are fine interlocking patterns. There are many canals, cause ways and tanks. As per the system of those days, bricks were used for construction works[179]. Eight large Chabutras are there, which were formed from fountain tanks[180]. Along the sides of the canals, there are cypress trees and flowers. A narrow channel along the edge of the roof supplied water to the trees.[181] There were barrages which regulated the flow of water.[182]

Nurjahan's tomb is a little distance away from the tomb of Jahangir. It is a simple one and is in the open field. It is on a square plinth. The Car Bagh is a square one and each side is 400 yards long. In it, is a small palace where she lived[183]. Now nothing remains, either about her tomb or about the garden around it. Hardly anything traceable now.

Nur Sarai Garden, Jallandhar :

It is 16 miles south of Jallandhar city. In this place, Nurjahan had constructed a Sarai and a garden in the year 1620 Ad. About it Jahangir writes : " It took up my quarter at Nur Sarai. At this spot the Vakils of Nurjahan Begam had built a lofty house and made a royal garden" [184]

The Garden - Tomb of Etimad-ud-Daula, Agra

In Agra there are a number of gardens laid by Nurjahan. In addition to that a number of gardens have been constructed and gifted to her by Jahangir. The following are some of them: Garden Tomb of her father Etimad, Moti Bagh, Zahara Bag, (Also called Nur

Manzil Garden), Ram Bagh (Nur Afsan Garden) etc. Tehse gardens are along the banks of the River Jamuna.

The Garden Tomb of Etimad at the edge of the River Jamuna in Agra. This was constructed by Nurjahan. Villiers stuart calls it "One of the most beautiful of all Mughal garden tombs" [185] It has gates in the middle of the surrounding walls. There is a water front pavilion also. It is in the usual Char Bagh form. It has water channels which divide the entire square area into four different but equal quadrants. The mausoleum is at the centre and at the meeting spot of the streams. On each side of the central platform there are four small tanks and each having a fountain. Channels carry water to all the four corners of the enclosure[186] up to the main gate there is a fine straight road. On either side of the road, trees have been planted at regular intervals.[187] On the whole, it can be said to be a well planned fine garden of the Mughal times.

Moti Bagh, Agra : Some foreign travelers of those days have said that Moti Bagh (also called as Moti Mahal) had belonged to Nurjahan Begam. Out of them, Pelsaert and Peter Munday are important persons. Murray tells about Dehra Bagh and King Akbar's garden on one side of river Jamuna. Moohe Ka Bag on the other side of the river. This was built by Noor Mahal.[188] Pelsaert also tells regarding two gardens and they were Char Bagh and Moti Mahal (This is nothing but Moti Bagh) [189]

Peter Munday also informs us aobu the two gardens. They have been situated on the eastern bank of Jamuna. In between them there

is a sarai. According to him they belonged to Nurjahan. In this connection, Munday says : " I departed from Agra and crossing over the river, I came to Noore Mohol ca sava- built by the old Queene Noore Mohal for the accommodation of Travellers- It stands between two gardens also built by her [190]. One of these gardens is said to have been the moti Bagh [191]

Ram Bagh (Nur Afshan or Gul Afsan Garden) Agra : Ram Bagh was originally laid out by Babar and then it was called as Gul-Afshan- (flower of scattering) Garden. It is on the left bank of river Jamuna. In it Babar had constructed a large well to cater to the needs of the people[192]. This garden belonged to Nurjahan in the time of Jahangir[193]. Later, the garden was called Nur Afshan garden (meaning light scattered). Nurjahan changed the design of Babar to some extent and undertook some new constructions[194] and [195] In the garden there wre many good fruit trees such as grapes, melons, mangoes, pineapples and trees of tamarind [196]. Jahangir and his consorts visited this garden every now and then. The garden was also used to host parties and fests. About such occasions, Jahangir himself has said like this in his memoirs :" On Wednseday, together with the women seated in a boat, I went to the Nur-afshan garden and rested there at night. As the garden belongs to the establishment of Nurjahan Begam, on Thursday, she held the royal entertainment and presented great offerings" [197]

This feast was to celebrate the commencement of the 16th year of the reign of Jehangir. [198]

This Nur Afshan garden (also called as Ram Bagh) was one of the old gardens of the Mughals in India. Today, its original form does not existence.

Zahara Bagh, (Nur Manizil garden) of Agra :

This garden has been mentioned in the memories of Jehangir. This garden is called Nur Manzil and is situated to the south of Ram bagh. It is on the eastern bank of the river Jamuna. According to H. Beveridge, Nur Manzil in the same garden which is also called Dahra Bagh [199]. Jehangir frequently stayed here. He had stayed here in 1613 and 1614 AD. [200] Dahra Bagh and Zahara Bagh are one and the same. This had belonged to a daughter of Babar [201]. No where is it said that this garden had belonged to Nur Jahan. But looking at the fact that it was maintained in excellent condition, Elison finally says that it must have belonged to Nurjahan [202].

Nur Manzil Garden was a beautiful one, with many new buildings and highly decorated residential buildings, reservoirs, tanks, fountains, and a huge well. In order to supply water to the plants and trees, thirty-two bullocks were used to lift the water from the well[203]. In this garden, Jehangir had spent many happy days. Regarding one of his visits, he says, " I passed the time in enjoyment in that rose garden of delight". [204]

Gardens of Royal Women in Shahjahan's Times : The Taj Mahal Garden :

The Taj Mahal is a grand mausoleum built by Shahjahan to express his love towards his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal. It is on the

bank of the river Jamuna at Agra. Around it, there is a beautiful garden. It is at the end of the garden, instead of being in the middle. To ensure even distribution of water, underground pipes and fountains have been put at appropriate places[205]. Many fountains are in the shape of buds made from marble. The pool at the centre of the garden has five fountains. The water comes from the river Jamuna. It gets stored in a large tank outside the Taj. There are many trees and flowers.

The Shalamar Bagh, Delhi :

A'azzu-n-Nissa, also known as Bibi Akbarbadi was one of the wives of Shahjahan. This is built just like the Shalamar Bagh of Kashmir.[207] According to Inayat Khan, this garden had been given to Bibi Akbarbadi by Shahjahan[208]. After her death the place came to be known as Azzabad.[209] It is 6 kms north west of Delhi and close to the Grand Trunk Road. It is at a distance 2 ½ koss from the palace[210]. As per the estimates of Muhamad Saleh, it was completed in four years time, at a cost of two lakhs of rupees[211]. Bibi Akbarabad had combined all the architectural and finer aspects of this garden also.[212] On the occasion of some festival, this garden was formally opened in September 1650 AD [213]. Bernier found this garden extremely beautiful and compared it to Versailles[214]. The garden does not exist now. It was ruined by the end of 18th century.

Gardens of Jahanara and Roshanara :

Both Jahanara and Roshanara were the daughters of Shahjahan. Both of them have constructed a good number of gardens

in Delhi, Kashmir and other places. Jahanara's tomb is near the shrine of Saint Nizamuddin in Delhi. It is a very simple structure. It is made up of Marble and there is no garden around it. She has laid down many fine gardens such as Bagh-i-Jahan at Agra [215]. Bagh -i- Safa [216]. Bagh-i- Nur or Bagh-i-Nur Afsan and Bagh-I- Aishabad in Kashmir.[217] All these were laid under the supervision of Jawahar Khan Kwajasara [218]. There was another garden called Bagh -i- Sahara in Kashmir and this had been gifted to Jahanara by Shahjahan[219]. She also owned gardens at Ambala [220]. and Surat [221] She also had a garden at Bachchol in which there were fine canals. In addition, there were also a large number of trees of various kind[222]. She constructed a beautiful garden in Dehli in 1650 AD. This was called Begam ka Bagh [223]. This was between what is now called National club and Lajpat Rai Market Begam ka Bagh had a number of pools, canals, fountains, canopies, many flower trees and trees bearing fruits. The famous canal called Ali Mardan Khan's Canal flowed at the centre, supplying a good flow of water. Many festivals were celebrated here. The concluding part of the women's festival Pankhon ka Mela was celebrated at this garden [224]. The Tis Hazari garden which is out side Kashmir Gate, later on became the Jagir of Jahanara Begam[225].

Roshanara's garden tomb at Delhi, was once the garden of Roshanara where she played as a child. It is in the north western suburb of Delhi.[226] (That area is also called Shahajahanabad (It is also called Roshanara's Garden). The tomb is of white marble and it is on a wide low platform. A raised canal flows between the building and the front entrance [227]

Garden of Zeb-un-Nisa:

Zeb-un-Nisa was the eldest daughter of Aurangzeb. She was a charming and learned woman with lot of talents in art and poetry. She was also interested in buildings and gardens and therefore she constructed a good number of them. The most outstanding gardens are Chowri Burji Bagh and Nawankot Bagh.

Almost all of Chowri Burgi Bagh are now in ruins, only some walls and gates now exist[225]. Out of the four tall minarets, three now remain. They are ornamented with tiles and there are also inscriptions in Arabic and Persian[229]. From the inscriptions, we known that Zeb-un-Nisa had presented this garden to her friend and instructress Miya Bai [230].

Zeb-un-Nisa's Garden is near Chaw Burji. After her death, she was buried here[232]. But some say that she was buried in Tis-Hazari Gardens in Delhi. Originally, had belonged to Zahanara Begam but later on it became the Jagir of Zeb-un-Nisa .

Other Arts : The Mughals were highly refined and cultured people. By and large they had a good understanding of and artistic abilities. Both men and women were very much interested in fine arts such as music, painting, dress designing and various types of decorations etc. Though the women (royal women) did not take much part in these art forms, Nurjahan is an exception . She is well known for her deep interest and accomplishments in the field of art.

Music and Dance : From time immemorial, music and dance are recognized as fine forms of expressions. In India also, they exist

from the past thousands of years. The Mughals contributed substantially to our already rich art forms of music and dance. They introduced new forms in both vocal and instrumental music. The Mughals encouraged dance also.

By and large, the Mughal emperors were fond of music. There were great musicians at their Durbar.[233] Some Emperors like Shahjahan and Aurangzeb, played some musical instruments very well. However at a later stage, Aurangzeb banned music and musicians.[234] Babar, Humayun, Akbar and Jehangir were in fact lovers of music. The great Tansen lived at Akbar's Court. It is said that Tansen's Deepak Raga made lamps to light up automatically, and Megha Mallar Raga once brought rain and suppressed a raging fire.

In addition to a number of male musicians, there were many female singers and dancers in the court of the Mughals. They performed on the occasion of marriages, festivals and also, whenever the Emperor wished to be entertained. There were many groups of entertainers and each group had a different name. The most popular of them were the Kanchanis. They were formerly known as Kanjaris, but Akbar changed their name to Kanchanis [236].

Famous Female Singers : Some of the famous female singers during the period of the Mughals were Meera Bai of Mewar, Mruganayani, the eighth queen of Raja Man Singh, and Roop mati of Malwa. As most of the Mughal Emperors deeply appreciated music, the women also took lot of interest in this art. There were many

Mughal Women who composed songs and even sang excellently. Many of them were able of play musical instruments very well.

Nurjahan, [237] Mumtaz Mahal and Zeb-un-Nisa were fine musicians. Nurjahan has composed many songs and lyrics. Shahjahan had great fascination for the music of Mumtaz Mahal. He adored her melodious voice [238]. Nadira Begam, the beautiful daughter of Prince Pervez was an accomplished singer in classical music. She could render Drupads well and they were highly appreciated by Shahjahan [240]. Shahjahan had presented to her a volume of Ragas, composed by Tansen [241]. Hira Bai, (popularly known as Zainabadi) was a slave -girl, but she had of musical talents and was charming also. These qualities, made Aurangzeb love her in her younger days. He never forgot her even after her death. [242]

Dancing : In the period of the Mughals, dancing was not a respectable art form and therefore, noble women did not take much interest in it, only some professional groups took to dance. The Mughal kings dance- recitals for their entertainment in their 'Durbars'. The royal women watched these performances from behind screens. Even Mughal paintings show the love of the Mughal women for dances. [243] Nurjahan was not interested in cheap music and dance. She was very interested in classical music and classical dance.[244] Aurangzeb had prohibited singing and dancing programmes in 'Durbar' halls, but they were allowed in the harems[245].

The Art of Decoration and Dress Making :

The Mughal women took much interest in art decorations and indulged in them whenever and wherever possible. Gulbadan in her "Humayun Nama" says that the royal woman took lot of interest in decorating palaces, gardens etc especially on special occasions. Maham Begam, wife of Babar and mother of Humayun herself, took special interest in decorations. [246] Once she gave a feast. On that occasion she had ordered illumination of bazaars, houses of noblemen and soldiers. From then onwards, illumination became a regular feature [247] On this occasion, Maham Begam had set up many ornamented pavilions and tents. [248]

Nurjahan was a woman of great creativity and a lover of arts. During her period, arts soared to great heights. She had a good sense of symmetry and colour combination. Musamman Burj at Agra fort was the apartment of Nurjahan during her younger days. It was known for its beautiful decorations which had been done under the supervision of Nurjahan herself. Later on, it was this building where Shahjahan was imprisoned in his last days [249]. The fine in lay work in Etimad -ud- Daula's Tomb, was also her own design. She redecorated the Emperor's Court in a grand manner [250] With her superior taste of accomplishing what is known as "Grandeur in Simplicity", she was able to save a lot of money. Not just that, the furnitures had acquired new style with modern designs [251].

Nurjahan invented new methods of arranging feasts and entertained guests in new and novel ways [252] Her ability for arranging

feasts was appreciated very much by Emperor Jehangir [252]. In his memoirs he speaks of many feasts well arranged and conducted by Nurjahan. Once, on the occasion of Shab-i-barat, Nurjahan had arranged a feast at one of her houses which was in the midst of a big tank [253] Jahangir once attended a big feast that had been arranged at Nur Afsan Gardens He had taken his favourite women also with him. [254]

In connection with the solar weighing of the Emperor Jehangir, Nurjahan had arranged a grand feast on 2nd September 1621. Regarding this Jehangir writes as follows :

Nurjahan begam begged that her Vakils might make the arrangements for the entertainment. In truth, they prepared one which increased the astonishment of the beholders. From the date on which Nurjahan entered into the bond of marriage with this suppliant, although in all weighing entertainment, both solar and lunar, she had made such arrangements as were becoming to the state, and knew what were the requirements of good fortune and prosperity yet on this occasion she had paid great attention to adorn the assembly, and arrange the feast [255].

Nurjahan gave great encouragement to textiles, dress and designing of jewellery and under her able guidance, all these art flourished. She herself, was very good in the art of embroidery. This trait of hers enabled her to guide the industries of textiles and dress making. A number of new varieties of textiles were introduced by her. The following are some of them. ' Dudami' which was a muslin cloth

with flowers and weighed only two 'dams' and this cloth was meant to be used for gowns 2 Panchtoliya, a cotton cloth, weighing about five tolas, this was used for veils 3. The Kinari, a type of silver the threaded lace 4 Badla or Badhah, which was a silver threaded brocade [256]. She also introduced a cheap but grand marriage costume for the benefit of ordinary people. Its cost was just Rs. 25/- She also designed and introduced a new type of carpet called 'Farsh-i-Chandani' which was also known as 'Sandal wood carpet'. Very soon it became popular and was famous all over the country. They were available in many designs and colours. Some of these designs exist even now [257]. Her interest in carpet designing percolated to the tomb of her father also. Some of those fine designs can be seen even now in the in-lay work at the tomb (of her father). A female dress designed by her became very popular.

Nurjahan also designed a number of gold and sliver ornaments. Excellent designs and new patterns were introduced by her. Kafi Khan, who wrote about one hundred years, later, says that the fashions introduced by Nurjahan were still very popular. [260]

Aurangzeb's daughter Pincess Zeb-un-Nisa was also interested in stitching and embroidery. [261]

Cooking : The Mughals had great flair for tasteful dishes. The dishes that the royal house holds introduced in their kitchens are even now popular and present all over the world as Mughalai Cuisine. The Mughal royal women often cook excellent dishes by themselves.

Nurjahan introduced a number of fine dishes which are quite popular even today. These days they are available at top class hotels.[262] There is a fine fruit-knife studded with jade and gems in the Salar Jung Museum at Hyderabad. It is said that it had once belonged to Nurjahan.[263] Princess Jahanara was also an excellent cook. She herself many times prepared food for the saint Hazarat Miyan Meer.[264] Aurangzeb's wife Udaipuri Mahal was also good at cooking.[265]

Painting : The Mughals were very fond of painting. Emperors like Babar and Jahangir were good painters themselves. There were great painters in the Mughal courts just as poets and musicians. Many of them had come from Persia and other Central Asian countries. [266]

We do not know clearly about the specific contributions of many Mughal ladies in the field of paintings. But, there are evidences to show that they had lot of interest in paintings. A painting in the Bharat Kala Bhavan of Varanasi shows a Mughal women painting something. [267] In another painting painter Ghulam is showing some painting to Nurjahan and Nurjahan is looking at it with lot of interest.[268] Some women painters such as Nadira Banu, Raqaiya Banu, Sahifa Banu and Nini lived in Jehangir's time.[269] But actual paintings by royal women do not exist at all.

Influence of Nurjahan : Beni Prasad says that Nurjahan knew the art of painting .[270] But there is no painting of hers. It is true that she showed a lot of interest in painting and it is also true that she influenced painting to a great extent. A book by Khwaja Abdus Sumad has a seal of Nurjahan which shows that the seal had been presented to her on some occasion by the Emperor Jahangir.[271] Because of her (Nurjahan) the art of painting became more popular in her days.[272] Nurjahan was capable of influencing the choice of paintings of

Jahangir. Jahangir had obtained from European merchants and Portuguese missionaries, some portraits and images of the Madonna and Christ and he was influenced by them. Later on, female images such as those of Roman goddesses also became popular. The way in which women were shown also began to change. Previously women were shown in veils. Evil women and women of loose virtue were shown as being eaten up by wild beasts or being drowned in water. But later they were shown with open neck and necklaces and also in comfortable poses and positions indicative of sensual forms of pleasure. [273]

Much is not known about the contribution of other royal women (and in general other women) in this field. Once Dara Shkoh, presented a fine collection of Mughal miniatures (of artifacts) to his beautiful wife Princess Nadira.[274] He had presented that to Nadira not only because of his love towards her, but also because she was loved paintings and pictures.

Thus we can see the great love of the Mughals towards Arts and Architecture. In these fields, the contribution of women especially the royal women have been quite substantial. It is a fact that the contribution of women was not as much as that of the men. But in those days, women were in purdah and the social set up was such that they were not allowed to socialize with men. Considering these restrictions and limitations, we can say that their contributions were quite substantial and appreciable.

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Chapter - 10

JOURNEYS AND EXCURSIONS OF THE WOMEN

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Though women were secluded in the Mughals days, we should not think that they were always confined within the four walls of their Mahals. They were allowed to travel and many times they sojourned to other countries also. They travelled with their men companions. Many times they were going with their men on hunting expeditions or on missions of business. Many times they travelled in search of cooler places. They went on many sight-seeing trips also.

Campings :

Maximum care was taken during the journey regarding the comforts and safety of the women. Many guards were put on duty while the women travelled and also around the place of their camps for their safety. Women were placed near the camp of the Emperor according to their rank and position. They were well-guarded by suitable positioning of the soldiers. Each Begam was asked to camp with her own establishment and within the area assigned to her.[1] In this connection Bernier says as follows :

"Adjoining the royal tents are those of the Begams or princesses and of the great ladies and principal female-attendants of the seraglio. These tents are also enclosed on every side by rich Kanates and in the midst of them are the tents of the inferior female domestics and other women connected with the seraglio. They were placed mostly in the same order according to the offices of the respective occupants."[2]

Sight seeing and Pilgrimages :

While travelling the women visited near-by holy places with the permission of the king or with the permission of the person who was in charge of them. They could even go on sight seeing trips to see the waterfalls etc. They could even beautiful buildings.[3] In his Memoirs, Jahangir mentions many such outings by his women when they had travelled with him. He tells about his hunting expedition near Rohtas.[4] On this expedition, nurjahan had killed four tigers with six shots.[5] Jahangir was very pleased and a grand feast was arranged on the banks of the lake at Fatepur.[6] He also paid a visit to Nur Afghan garden which belonged to Nur Jahan.[7] Hamida Banu had accompanied Humayun on a trip to Iraq and during that trip she went on a number of hunting expeditions.[8] He also paid visits to flower gardens and to some splendid buildings of Sultan Hussain Mirza in Khurasan.[9] All these visits have been mentioned by Gulbadan Begam. With Hamida Banu, Humayun also saw a number of places like Heart and Jam. At Jam, he saw shrines of his own and also that of Ahmed, the ancestor of Hamida. He also paid a visit to the tomb of Ardabil, who was the founder the of Sufi Dynasty.[10]

Position during travels :

While traveling, usually women travelled behind men.[11] The journey time that was under taken was more move.[12] Manucci says that though the princesses and women were at the end of the carvan, in many cases they arrived at the destination earlier because they would have taken the shorter route.[13] Sometimes the royal women

travelled in thir own groups and went ahead of the men.[14] This was done to keep the Emperor's journey a secret.[15]

Methods of traveling :

For their journey there were many conveyances. In any journey of the royal women, the most important thing was to take proper care to see that they were always in Purdah. Writers of those days have written about the various conveyances that were used by the royal men and women.

Edward Terry writes as follows :

"His (Jahangir's) wives and women are carried on palankas or upon elephants, or else in cradles hanging on the sides of dromedaries, covered well and attended by eunuchs."[16]

Abul Fazl tel us about the 'Palakies'. The men who carried the palkis had been trained well and they walked carefully and in unison so that the people sitting in the palkis never felt the jolts.[17]

Many times the royal women were travelled in 'howdas' mounted on elephants. For the purposes of traveling, elephants were commonly used because they were strong, capable of bearing loads and they had the capacity of traveling for long distances. The 'howda' which used to be mounted on the elephant, was a square structure richly furnished and finished with gold and beautiful coverings. Terry described the howdas as "pretty receptacles, surrounded with curtains which stand up like low and little turrents upon their backs."[19] Bernier calls the howda as Mikdember (Mekdambar) and says:

These lovely and distinguished females, seated in Mikdembers, are thus elevated above the earth like so many superior beings borne along through the middle region of the air."[20] It was possible to accommodate upto eight members in these Mikdembers. Four people could sit in one row and another four in the opposite row.[21] There were enourmous richness and artistry in the making of these haudas. Manucci says that they are 'dome roofed' throne. He further adds that they were very brilliant, made all of enameled gold and highly adorned.[22] Acording to Jehangir each hauda that was used by the royal families was worth Rs. 30000.[23] Proper care was taken to see that the royal women were never exposed to public view while getting into or out of hauda.[24] Although they were not exposed to the public eye,[25] arrangements were such that they could look outside very clearly.[26]

The Palanquins or palki was yet another simple and popular mode of transportation. It was sometimes like a bed usually six feet long. It had railings around with a fine roof of brocade and satin. It has usually made up of bamboo. It was usually carried by men (one at each corner) and made to stand on special poles when it was to stopped for a few minutes while it was in transit.[27] Sometimes, it was suspended on two camels or two small elephants.[28] The palanquins of royal women were covered with nettings of gold threads.[29] Sometimes they were ornamented with precious stones and costly pieces of glasses.[30] About the palanquin Ovington says that the carriage was "as easier and pleasant as that of our chairs in the streets of London, but far surpasseth them in the point of state quick dispatches of a

journey."[31] Palki (Pallakki) was a popular and common mode of transport for women even in the period of Babar.[32]

Sometimes women were travelled in 'Chaudoles' which were carried on men's shoulders.[33] "they were shining, painted and covered by fine silk nets of many colours, enriched with embroidery, fringes and beautiful tassels."[34] Women wer able to travel in these 'Chaudals' quite comfortably.[35]

Carriages were yet another mode of transportation. They were very popular and were suited for long distance travels. These carriages were drawn by oxen or horses.[36] Della Valle says that there were a number of such carriages both in towns and in the villages.[37] He further adds that the oxen ran in gallops like horses.[38] When the royal women were in them, all the sides and windows would completely covered in order to maintain Purdah.[39] Della Valle described them as closed coaches.[40] Bullock carriages were called 'bahals'.[41] It is said that Akbar had invented a carriage which could be used for transporting men, materials, and also for grinding corn.[42] There was also a special type of carriage which was drawn by an elephant and that the carriage was used for the of bathing purposes.[43] Sir Thomas Roe had given to Jahangir in 1616 AD an English coach which had become very popular in those days. Jahangir presented this to Nurjahan.[44] She renovated it and had it nicely covered by costly and artistic screens. Jahangir was very impressed by it, he got a similar coach prepared and kept it for his personal use.[45]

Many times women travelled on horse back whenever they wanted to travel fast. Especially in hilly areas, horses were found to be

very useful for traveling purposes. Many times, camesl were also used.[48] Hamida Banu enjoyed these journies on a camel or horse with Humayun.[49]

When the royal women had to cross rivers, they did so by means of boats. Gulbadan Begam tells about an incident where the whole house hold of Babar went with him to a place called Dholpur by boat. The boats were luxurious with cushions and fine sails.

"They were rowed by oarsmen in gallery fashion or else driven by the heart-shaped paddles as seen in Kashmir today, the boatman sitting behind the curtained drawing rooms of the women. There was no tiller but a helsman steered with a long oar and chanted a rhythm.[51]

As crossing a river on rafts was very dangerous, women were never allowed to do so.[52] During the period of Akbar, some royal women had gone on a tour to Mecca. Naturally they sailed on a ship.[53] Their return journey was not smooth, they had to undergo a lot of troubles.

Whenever the royal women went out, much care was taken regarding their comforts and security. Whenever the royal women went out, well-dressed young women went ahead in front of them with a fan of peacock feathers and they fanned them in order to ward off dust and flies.[54] Labourers used to sprinkle water on the road before the royal women went, in order for the dust to settle down.[55]

Mannucci reports as follows :

When Begam Sahib leaves her palace to go to court, she proceeds in reat pomp, with much cavalry and infantry and many eunuchs surrounded her closely, push on one side every one they find in front of them shouting out, pushing and assaulting everyone without the least respect for people. The same is done for all the princesses of the blood-royal when they come out.[56]

Once Manucci had seen the style of Roshanara Begam on a journey and about it he observes as follows : " There were a number of bold and aggressive men on foot to drive away every body, noble or pauper with blows from sticks and with pushes."[57] If a person wanted to get any work done, while she was on some outing, he used to present something and if she was favourably inclined she used to accept the gifts. In such a case, that person was sure of his request being granted. If she (Roshanara) was not favourably inclined, she used to direct her guards to drive that person away.[58]

A royal woman on her journey could have been approached only with great difficulty. About this Bermier writes : "Woe to any unlucky cavalier, however exalted in rank, who meeting the procession, is found too near. Nothing can exceed the insolence of the tribes of eunuchs and footmen which he has to encounter; and they eagerly avail themselves of any such opportunity to beat a man in the most unmerciful manner.[59]

If the Emperor went out, usually his women also accompanied him. Many times the women had to face lot of difficulties on account

of bad routes and unfavorable circumstances. But inspite of the many difficulties that they faced, they never refused to accompany their lords. For example Babar's grandmother Aisa Daulat Begam and his mother Qutlug Nigar Khanum went with Babar even in the most difficult tours and expeditions. Hamida Banu Begam also did in the same way in the cased of Humayun. Similarly Nurjahan, Mumtaz Mahal and Dara's wife Nadira Begam also accomplanied their husbands in the most difficult travels and expeditions. They were thus symbols of loyalty, obedience and courage in the case of their men folk.

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Chapter - 11

COURTESANS AND PUBLIC WOMEN

Chapter - 11

THE SOCIAL POSITION OF THE COURTESANS OR THE PUBLIC WOMEN

The prostitutes or public women, even though their trade was opined a necessary evil in society, at times received great fame and honour for their talents and skill, in the field of literature, art, music and dancing. Women who engaged in sexual activity for payment, were a recognized institution in the Mughal period for their accomplishments and proficiency and skill in singing and dancing. The courtesans or women of the night were considered as one of the best sources of recreation and entertainment and amusement for the wealthy and the well born and upper class of people. It was not regarded a case of disrepute or infamy for a man to visit the house of a courtesan to find amusement for himself. Therenot himself remarks that: " nobody minds it when they see a man go to their Houses" [1] Another important foreign traveler John Splinter Stavorinus, who visited India during the period under review throws some light on information regarding the public women or prostitutes of his time. He observes : "Prostitution is not thought a disgrace; there are everywhere licensed places where a great number of loose women are kept; it is a livelihood that is allowed by law, upon payment to the 'Fausdar' or Sheriff of the place, of a certain duty imposed upon the persons of the females who adopt this mode of life." [2]

Contemporary sources of literature and other sources give us ample information in regard to the public women of the period. For

instance Ghanaram Chakravarty, a famous Bengali poet who flourished during the 17th and the 18th centuries, refers to a courtesan called 'Surikha' in his work "Sri Dharma Mangal". He also mentions about the prostitutes, who in large numbers lived in Puri, a city of Orissa. Another poet Malik Muhammad Jayasi in his "Padmavati", refers to the prostitutes who adorned themselves with gorgeous attires and ornaments to attract the attention of the strangers. Besides this, we find also similar references in other contemporary Hindi works. Rahim, a famous Hindi poet and a noble of Akbar's court, refers to the public women in his work entitled 'Rahim-Bilas'. Here the poet refers to them as 'Paturi', In the poetic works of Keshavadas " Kavi – Priya", we find a reference to six most beautiful and skillful prostitutes in the court of Raja Indrajit Singh, the ruler of the Orchha State in Rajasthan.[3]

Badaoni also mentions that in Delhi the number of prostitutes increased to such a great extent that it became impossible to count them.

Manucci mentions that in the city of Lahore, six thousand houses were occupied by the public women.

It is of great interest to note here that the number of the public women during the period under review, increased more than what it was before[4] and the cause might be due to some horrible social practices which forced women (particularly those who showed signs of rebellion and disobedience towards the existent social customs of the day) to follow an immoral way like prostitution for their livelihood.

The practice of Sati or Self-immolation was one such reprehensible practices, which ruined the lives of many Hindu women. To protect themselves from the persecution and torture and humiliation, arising out of these practices, many Hindu women adopted the profession of a prostitute after the demise of their husbands. Some of them, losing all sense of shame and modesty, took to this profession even during the time when their husbands were alive.[5] Also, some of the Governors of different provinces at times, compelled some young, unmarried women, both Hindu and Muslim, to take up the profession of a public woman and to live with other prostitutes in the villages or towns meant for them.[6] This aided in the rise of the number of prostitutes during the era under review.

One of the prominent characteristics of the period under review, was that no effort had ever been made before to the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb to abolish and do away with this immoral institution. On the contrary the State leadership took steps to regulate this profession for the benefit of revenue. Prostitution was an important source of State revenue. Every public woman was required to pay to the State a fixed amount of money in the form of tax.[7] Manucci informs us that in Lahore the 'Kotwal' collected every week, a large amount of money from six thousand houses of disrepute.[8] There was a class of dancing girls who were known as 'Kanchans'. These dancing and singing girls flourished during the reigns of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb[9]. Bernier refers to them thus... " they were not indeed the prostitutes seen in bazaars, but those of a; more private and respectable class, who attend the grand weddings of Omrahs and Mansabdars, for the

purpose of singing and dancing. Most of these 'Kanchans' are handsome and well dressed and sing to perfection; and their limbs, being extremely supple, they dance with wonderful ability, and are always correct in regard to time; after all however, they were but common women."[10]

Besides, the Kanchans, there was also another class of dancing girls, who were not meant for public entertainment but were entirely dedicated to the service of God and the sacred and holy temples and houses of God. These women were called 'Dev-Dasis'[11] or han-maidens of God. 'Dev Dasis' enjoyed a recognized status, next only to the priests in the temples. They were obtained by the shrines at a very tender age either as presents and gifts or purchased. The practice of dedicating young and nubile girls to the temples was common practice during the period under review.[12] The most important duty of these dancing girls was to dance in the temples and sing hymns in honour of the deity of the temple. Though these dancing girls were expected to perform certain religious and spiritual duties, they never led a good, moral life. Bowrey, referring to it, observes " these dancing women have a privilege above all other in these Eastern parts, which cause such multitudes to Endeavour to attain such Employs, where they may enjoy earthly pleasures enough without any scandal to themselves or relations." [13]

Dubois also mentions the illicit relationship which existed between the Dev-Dasis and the Brahmins (priestly and high class) of the temples.[14]

Elizabeth Cooper commenting on this, writes : "These girls who have no word to say in regard to the disposal of their persons, are public women, and the gains of their profession go towards the support of the temple."[15]

The Courtesans, who were in general, meant to serve as a source of enjoyment and recreation, played important and active roles on happy occasions like marriages, births, feasts and festivals. It was the most common practice, mainly among the royal [16] and aristocratic sections to seek the companionship of the common women or the dancing girls in the marriage parties to enhance the mirth and joy of the attending guests. [17]

No royal or aristocratic festival or feast was considered successful or complete without the presence of the dancing and singing girls. Abdul Fazl refers to a special class of singing girls known as "Rhadhi" who sang on occasions like marriages and birthday-festivities. Emperor Shahajahan who was very " fond of the sex" invited the Kanchans,[18] who were renowned for their physical charms, beautiful singing and wonderful dances, to all state fairs with a view to enhance their impressiveness.[19] Therenot mentions that the Kanchans entertained the women who were invited to open their shops in the Mina Bazar or Fancy Fair. It is true that the free mingling with the public women caused a considerable moral degeneration among the people.

The Mughal Emperors, with a view, to halt the decline in public morality, adopted some innovative and bold measures against this

notorious institution. For instance, Emperor Akbar passed some laws which were meant not to abolish prostitution, but to impose certain restrictions upon it, so that the prostitutes would not be easily available to the people. He, first of all, selected an area outside the capital city for the habitation of all the prostitutes who assembled in the city and dubbed it as "Shaitan Parah" or the Devils' Quarters.

Badaoni, the famous contemporary historian of Akbar, mentions in great detail about all the measures which the Emperor took up against these common women. He refers to them thus... "And he appointed a keeper, and a deputy, and a secretary for this quarter, so that any one who wished to associate with these people, or take them to his house, provided he first had his name and condition written down might, with the connivance of the Imperial Officers have connection with any of them that he pleased. But he did not permit any man to take dancing girls to his house at night, without conforming to these conditions, in order that he might keep the matter under proper control. But if any one wished to have a virgin, if the petitioner was a well-known courtier, he sent a petition by the Deputy and obtained permission from court."[20]

Emperor Akbar also took author step to monitor and check prostitution. In private he called a number of well-known prostitutes and asked them to disclose the names of the people who had led them author. They disclosed the names of important and prominent Amirs, who were later severely reprimanded and punished by the Emperor.[21]

But all the noble endeavours of Emperor Akbar to restrict the practice proved futile.[22]

Little or no efforts were made to check prostitution, after Akbar's reign. The public women who received ample encouragement by the succeeding Emperors continued, and even intensified their nefarious activities. But the tragedy of their lives came during the region of Emperor Aurangzeb, who because of his Puritanic outlook could not tolerate the reprehensible activities and influence of the public women in his kingdom. He became very aware of the degenerating public morality and took several measures to rescuer the people from such depravity. Most of his rules and laws.

Most of his rulers and laws were directed towards the prohibition of prostitution. He commanded : " They must either marry or clear out of the realm." [23] This command seems to have yielded some immediate effects as Manucci reports, "This was the cause that the palaces and great enclosures where they dwelt went to ruin little by little; for some of them married and others went away, or, at least, concealed themselves." [24] Besides, his command regarding the ban of music also checked the rapid progress in the number of prostitutes to a considerable extent.[25] His endeavors, just like Emperor Akbar, towards the abolition of prostitution also proved short lived and abortive.[26] Inspite of his objections to permit the public women or the dancing girls in the court, he could not restrain the age old practice of receiving the visit of the dancing girls on every Wednesday at the 'Am-khas' or the Hall of Private Audience, where they made Salaam(Salute)

to the Emperor.[27] Besides this, he also could not restrict the free movements of the dancing girls in the royal harem, where they were given a cordial invitation to entertain and amuse the Begums and the Princesses.[28] Thus, it seems that prostitution during the era under consideration, inspite of the many restrictions imposed by the rulers, received great encouragement by the wealthy and upper class of the people, who instead of doing away with this institution, tried their best to defend and safeguard it.

THE EMPEROR AND THE ARISTOCRACY'S PATRONAGE OF PUBLIC WOMEN :

So far as the patronage of the public women by the Mughal Emperors and their noblemen is concerned, we find that since the Muhammedans were extremely fond of women, whom they considered to be their main source of relaxation and enjoyment,[29] they conferred the maximum favors and privileges on them. Except for Emperor Aurangazeb, almost all the Mughal Sovereigns patronized and visited them. Emperor Shahjahan, who was a great lover of music and dancing gave ample encouragement to the public women, whose number increased to an unusual extent during his rule.[30] He permitted some special favors and privileges to the Kanchans (a special class of dancing and singing girls) whom he liked more than other sections of the dancing girls.

Manucci clearly states about the patronage which Emperor Shahajahan gave to this class of dancing girls. He states "This class is more esteemed than others, by reason of their beauty. When they go to the court, to the number of more than five hundred, they all ride in

highly embellished vehicles and are clothed in rich raiment. All of them appear and dance in the royal presence."[31] His sons also followed in the footsteps of their fathers, and provided the dancing girls with a good deal of necessities and facilities. Dara Shukoh, his eldest son, was very fond of music and dancing. He also gave patronage to some of the talented dancing girls. His esteem and affection for the dancing girls reached a point when he fell in love with one of them, a girl called Ra'Na-Dil. He married her and she was given the same privilege, dignity and honour as other Mughal princesses.[32] Another of Shahajahan's sons, Sultan Sujah was also a passionate lover of dancing and singing and he gave ample encouragement and support to the dancing girls. [33] Governors and other officers of different provinces were also great lovers of the arts and patronized them. [34]

Not only the aristocrats and Mughal rulers patronized the public women, but also the Hindu Rajas and other wealthy men of society. Baz Bahadur, the ruler of Malwa, a gifted music teacher himself, spent most of his energy and time in collecting and encouraging talented dancing and singing girls, who were called 'Patarans.' [35]

Raja Indrajit Singh the ruler of the Orchha State in Rajasthan was also a great lover and patron of gifted common women. He had several of such women in his seraglio. [36]

The public women thus received great encouragement and support by both the aristocrats and the rulers during the era under consideration.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND TALENTS OF SOME OF THE PUBLIC WOMEN IN THE MUSIC, DANCING AND EDUCATION FIELDS :

Some of the dancing and singing – girls during the era under review, showed great skill and were greatly accomplished in the fields of music, dancing and education. Most of the public women were highly talented and had received and acquired excellent education.[37] The Dev Dasis[38] who were attached to the shrines and temples received suitable education and training to perform their task of reciting and singing on the occasion of certain festivals.[39] Being given the royal patronage, some of the public women took great care and endeavored to develop and enrich literature and the fine arts.[40] They displayed their educational and scholarly skills by composing beautiful verses and other excellent literary works and thus, they turned out to b talented poetesses as well. [41]

The contemporary Hindi and Bengali literary sources give us enough evidences relating to the highly skilled and erudite public women in the Mughal era. In Ganaram's 'Sri Dharma Mangal' a Bengali work, we find references to a courtesan called 'Suriksha' a gifted and talented dancing girl. The poet writes that Suriksha, to prove her erudition invited Prince Lausen to a contest and put some difficult questions for solutions.[42]

Keshavadas, a renowned Hindi poet who flourished and prospered during the reign of Emperors Akbar and Jahangir, familiarizes us with a highly erudite and eloquent courtesan called Rai Pravin or Pravin Rai,[43] who was one of the favorite poetesses of King

Indrajit Singh of Orchha State of Rajasthan. She was renowned for her extra-ordinary erudition and intellect. She was an accomplished and composed some very beautiful verses. She usually wrote in Hindi.[44] She emulated the style of writing of the bard Keshavadas, as she was his ardent disciple and used his style in her own compositions.[45] The poet Keshavadas wrote in high praise and commended her verses and poetry. [46]

The public women were famous and well-known not only for their dancing and singing accomplishments but also for their literary and erudition skills. Almost all the public women knew the art of singing and dancing by which they entertained the people. The courtesans who found refuge and a haven in the court of Baz Bahadur, the ruler of Malwa, were all renowned " over the world for music." [47]

The Kanchans were also highly accomplished dancers and singers.[48] The Dev-Dasis too were reputed dancers who displayed their art of dancing by dancing on auspicious occasions or important festivals.[49]

Abdul Fazl reports and gives us an elaborate list of musical instruments with which the courtesans acquired great proficiency and skill.[50]

Malik Muhammad Jayasi, who lived and flourished during the reign of Sher Shah, the Afghan ruler, also refers to a class of public women who were extremely skilled in playing on the Veena, a musical instrument that is very difficult to master, but they, the public women

played on it with a skilled hand, that the people were engrossed and lost their sense and were totally overwhelmed when they listened to the music of this instrument.[51]

Thus, a careful review of the foregoing pages helps us to discover and come to a conclusion that the social position and status of the public women during the era under consideration, was very much dignified, honourable and respectable. They enjoyed a special status and were held in high repute and esteem by the people for their skills, talents and accomplishments in the field of the fine arts and education. But in the music and dancing field they were totally unsurpassed and unrivalled.

CONCLUSION :

A careful study of these pages of this review leads us to certain general observations. The social status of the Indian women during the era under consideration was not as satisfactory as it is depicted; it suffered from a lack of commendation and general appreciation. The life of the Indian women in those days was full of dreariness and reprehensible event. It was considered a sign of ill-omen and dishonour and also a loss of social prestige for the parents in the events of the birth of a female child. To avoid this sort of disgrace, some sections among the Rajputs killed their infant daughters soon after their birth or during their infancy. This was not the only misfortune women had to face and undergo during their childhood. In fact, early marriages was responsible for greater sufferings and hardships that girls had to undergo at a very tender age.

Since both Hindus and Muslims preferred the practice of an early marriage, they gave their daughters in marriage at an early age that they actually did not know even the significance of marriage. In most instances the young girls were unhappy in their married life. Also, the system of polygamy was another reason of their unhappiness and troubles for the Indian women. The Muslims were more polygamous by nature than their Hindu sisters in this respect and as such the Muslim women suffered more than the Hindu women. The craze and greed of the Mughal sovereigns, nobles as well as the Hindu Rajas to maintain seraglios consisting of many women of different castes, creeds, nationalities and eve colour made our India women nothing but objects to satisfy the bestial and sexual hunger and craze for worldly pleasures. The practice of divorce or talaq which was most prevalent in the Muslim society took away from the Muslim women even the security of a decent, married life. Divorce was also prevalent among some class of the low caste Hindus.

In general, there was no discrimination on the ground of gender in respect of food. Women ate the same food which were enjoyed and eaten by the men. In some special cases, for instance, during the period of pregnancy, the women preferred some special kind of dishes.

The attire of the women differed according to their age social status and economic conditions. The well born and upper class women of both the communities. Hindu and Muslim, generally wore costly and grand attires of different colurs and designs, whereas the women form the lower class of society contented themselves with the

most ordinary type of dress. The toiletries and cosmetics used by the women, were in no way inferior in quality and variety than those found in the modern age. In this respect, the women of those days displayed their progress more than their counterparts of the modern generation. They adorned themselves form head to toe with the one aim of augmenting and enhancing their physical allure and charms. The main ornaments used by the Indian women of those days was that they were mostly heavy in form and differed in patterns and designs. The women, irrespective of their caste and creed, and social standing and position, had a great fascination to cover their person from head to foot with innumerable ornate ornaments and jewelry made of different metals.

The 'Purdah' system was more strictly followed among the Muslim women than their Hindu sisters. Due to the strictness and rigidity of this practice, Muslim women were not permitted to uncover their faces even before their kith and kin. But the Hindu women were largely free from this bondage. Whenever the Muslim ladies went out of their residence, they had to cover their whole body with the 'Burqa' so that the passers-by might not get an opportunity to look at them and cast lewd glances at them. The aristocratic and wealthy women traveled in well covered palauquins or litters.

The women of those days, certainly enjoyed different kinds of pastimes, amusements and games. Women coming from wealthy and well-to-do classes of society enjoyed facilities like outdoor games of 'Chaugan' or Polo, 'Shikar' or hunting and animal fights, while the rest

of the women, mostly the Hindu women, played outdoor games like Hindola or Jhula(swings), 'Jala-keli' a kind of water sport, 'Chor Mihichani' or 'Ankh- Michayal' or hide-and-seek games. Indoor games like Chaupar, playing cards and chess were the monopoly, generally of the women of the upper class.

One of the most important and famous source of entertainment and amusement of the Indian women, generally of the royal and aristocratic women, was the Mina Bazar or Fancy Fair held on Persian New Year's Day known as Navaroze. They also amused themselves with dancing, singing and reading romantic novels or listening to long sagas of love stories.

A number of festivals, fairs and other festive occasions among the Muslims and Hindus also provided our women with sufficient opportunities for their recreation and pastimes.

Since there was no provision to impart education to women on a large scale, those belonging to the lower and poorer classes and also those living in rural areas distanced themselves from all intellectual developments and hence, were illiterate. Higher education was wholly confined to the women of the wealthy and well-to-do class of society. The girls of both communities took their primary lessons along with the boys in the same school under the same tutor. But as soon as the girls reached puberty, they were not permitted to receive education with the boys and thus, their educational development was cut short. Only the girls belonging to the rich and aristocratic enjoyed facilities to continue their education with the help of private instructors and

tutors. Some of the Mughal women exhibited great talents and accomplishments in the field of fine arts and education, singing and dancing. Some of them emerged as great writers and poetesses and wrote many valuable works both, in the Persian and Arabic languages. They also maintained huge libraries in their living apartments and establishments and enriched them with rare and valuable works, collected from different parts of the world. Madrsas were also built in important cities, and thus made themselves immortal as great patronesses of learning. The attainments, achievements and skills of the Indian women during the era under consideration, in the field of fine arts were in many respects, greater than those of their modern sisters.

The state of Hindu widows was miserable and pathetic. They were treated like the most condemned and pitiable creatures. But it was different with Muslim widows, as widow-remarriages were allowed in Muslim society. Muslim women did not have a face the same humiliation as their Hindu counterparts after the death of their husbands. It was consider a terrible loss of honour and prestige if a Hindu woman was unwilling to immolate herself with the body of her dead husband. Sati was obligatory and a common practice, prevalent in the Hindu society. Hindu women were immolated on the pyre of their dead husbands, most often by force. The procedure to burn the widows was inhuman and cruel. Jauhar, the practice of the brave Rajput women in order to uphold and save their honour in the event of a defeat of their men on the battle-field.

The social position of the prostitutes and public women was not shameful or disgraceful, as it is in today's world. Prostitution was a universal institution in the Mughal era. Prostitutes or the ladies of the night were respected by people for their many talents and accomplishments in the fields of dance, singing, fine arts and education. Most of these courtesans were accomplished and reputed writers and poetesses of the era. They received encouragement from the aristocrats and the wealthy. Despite the best efforts of Emperors Akbar and Aurangzeb to ban this sordid profession, the courtesans continued to reap rich dividends during the era under review. Some of them were also great patronesses of refinement, culture and learning and spent extravagantly on the maintenance of talented scholars and men of letters.

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Chapter - 12

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN

Chapter – 12

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION AND WOMEN

The Mughal Age was one of the most glorious periods of Indian history and the royal life in the Mughal harem and the cultural heritage bears testimony to the economic prosperity and affluence of the Mughal era. The empire of the Mughals saw many developments in all the spheres of economy which included agriculture, commerce and industries, banking and currency and internal and external trade. Much has been written and discussed by eminent writers and scholars on the various aspects of the economic position of the Mughal period. The economic prosperity with contributions of the royal Mughal women occupies a unique place in the annals of India.

TRADE EMBARKED BY SEA :

The Mughal Emperors took a personal interest in commerce and trade especially on trade over the seas. The Mughal Emperors owned ships, side by side with other merchant vessels, that were used for sea-trade. Emperor Akbar was keenly interested in this field. Jahangir too, had his own ships and traded often in the sea trade. Shahjahan, when he was known as Prince Khurram, was appointed the Governor of Gujarat, carried on a highly Lucrative trade in textiles, broad cloth, indigo and tobacco, gum, lac; and continued even when he was crowned as Emperor.[1] This lucrative Red Sea trade became an area of contention between Prince Khurram and the English East India company.[2]

A flourishing and prosperous atmosphere of trade and commerce prevailed during the Mughal Era, so it was not unusual or rare that along with the Mughal emperors the royal Mughal women with their close kith and kin and also the nobles took a keen interest in this enterprise, and actively took part in the economic scenario during the Mughal period. Though not too many royal women of the Mughal harem evinced a great interest in the economic field, yet there were several distinguished women of that Era like Jahangir's mother Maryam-uz-Zamani, Nur Jahan Begum and Shahjahan's daughter Jahan Ara, who were known to be actively involved in commerce and trade of that time. There were several women who contributed indirectly to commerce and trade.

MUGHAL WOMEN WHO WERE INVOLVED IN TRADE AND COMMERCE :

The Mughal emperors' wives were enterprising and built market places where there were lots of selling and buying; they built caravan sarais for the merchants and travellers, and also owned ships which carried on a flourishing sea-trade. These ships usually operated from Surat and other ports on the Red Sea. There were several different kinds of ships sailing like the ships carrying pilgrims which were 400 to 1500 tons in size; then there were the junks built on the Chinese model which were roughly about 30 to 400 tons.[3] The Mughal Royal Women also possessed large jagirs, the revenues and incomes of which went to them personally. Without a doubt, it can be said that they did their best to improve and better the economic condition of these jagirs.

The Mughal women also indirectly contributed to the prosperous and flourishing economy of the Mughal period. The requirements and needs of the Mughal harem gave an impetus to many industries, including both the Imperial Karkhanas and also those which flourished in other parts of the country. To fulfil their needs certain goods were also brought from foreign lands. Starting with textiles, it was already known that the Mughal harem women dressed in the most expensive fabrics made from the finest material, whether it was wool, cotton or silk. The muslin (cloth) used for their clothing were of three different types - Ab-e-Rawan (or running water), Baft Hawa (or woven air), and Shabnam (or evening dew). [4] Muslins which were called Shabnam were famous as Dhaka Malmal and came from Dhaka. The Mughal women had a great love for silken fabrics and dresses which resulted in a lot of silk being imported from foreign lands like China and Persia and also brought from other parts of the country like Orissa, Bengal and Banaras. Some of the other popular and well known fabrics used by the Mughal women were satin, kimkhab , kattan, tasser, tafta, ambari, atlas etc. Brocaded velvet and plain velvet called makhmal was brought from Herat, Mashad, Yazd, Sashan, and Europe, and from some other places too. [5] From these fabrics beautiful and stunning dresses were made by expert dress-makers for the royal women of the harem. These dresses were also richly and exquisitely embroidered by expert seamstresses.

Apart from fine fabrics and gorgeous dresses, the Mughal women were also greatly interested in jewellery, items of ornate

decoration needed in their palaces, furniture items, looking-glasses and mirrors, laces for curtains, carpets, shoes and slippers, cutlery, vases, quilts, bedsheets, pillow-covers, shawls and many other necessities. Many of these articles were manufactured in the Imperial Karkhans as by skilled artisans but some of the goods were also brought from foreign countries. For instance, exquisite carpets were made in Kashmir, Fatepur and Jaunpur, but the most beautiful ones were brought from Iran and Central Asia. Most of these goods were brought in from foreign countries as well as form other places of the country, this certainly helped in commerce and trade, both internal and external trade.

However, too many Mughal women did not show any interest in the economic field. Until Akbar's time we do not come across any royal lady who contributed in any way in this field except for one of Humayun's wives named Haji Begam who incidentally built a sarai called Arban Sarai near Delhi in 1560 AD. Which could accommodate 300 travellers. [6] The same women Haji Begum also erected Humayun's Tomb. Haji Begum had a charitable nature and being deeply religious and charitable she built this sarai. Building of sarais during the Mughal time, as in times before and after, certainly helped boost up the trade and commerce by providing security and shelter to pilgrims and also traders and travellers who journeyed from one place to another. Because such secure measures were taken, traders were able to move freely and without fear with their goods and merchandise to other places in order to sell and buy their wares. In the Mughal period, the Emperors and other members of the

royal family and also many other nobles and other rich and influential men, all undetrtook the construction of sarais as works of public utility.

JODHA BAI'S PARTICIPATION IN MATTERS OF SEA TRADE :

Akbar's wife and the mother of Jahangir, Jodha Bai, who was later bestowed the title of Maryam-uz-Zamani, was greatly interestd in commerce and trade and was the first woman who actively took part in the business of trade and commerce. She owned many ships and carried out brisk trade form the Surat port to various ports on the Red Sea. One of the ships she owned was the famous 'Rahimi of Surat' [7] which carried about 1500 pilgrim passengers to Mocha or the Jeddah port of Mecca. John Jourdain calls it ' the Beheme' [8] But many other foreigners called it the Remee.' [9]

Foreign so Sojourners and travellers who were in India during Jahangir's time mention in their accounts the ships that were owned by the Queen Mother, Maryam-uz-Zamani, and the brisk business and trade that was carried on by them between India and Arabia. William Finch notes that "the Emperor's mother, or others acting under her instructions and aegis, carried on extensive trading operations, and at about this time a vessesl belonging to her was being laden for a voyage to Mocha." [10] The position of England's ambassador Hawkins, appears to have suffered at the Mughal Court as a result of the dealings that he, Finch, had with the Queen Mother's agents who were sent to Bayana to buy indigo. [11]

Foreign merchant powers cast a covetous eye on the Queen Mother's ships including the 'Rahimi'. The English wanted to capture these ships to make the Mughal Emperor Jahangir aware of the grievances of the English merchants. [12] In 1613 AD the Mughals came into direct conflict with the Portuguese for capturing one of the Queen Mother's ships " Which was to be laden for Mocha", [13] This ship was laden with valuable cargo and many passengers on board and also had a Portuguese pass guaranteeing her against molestation.[14] The Mughals were greatly infuriated by this high-handedness of the Portuguese. When the Portuguese showed no sign of returning the ship Mukarrab Khan was sent to Surat with explicit "orders to stop all ship trafficking and lay siege to the Portuguese town of Daman b way of reprisals. At the same time the Church of the Jesuits at Agra was shut down and the Fathers were deprived of the allowances they had hither to received." [15]

Sir Thomas Roe als mentions the ships owned by Maryam –uz-Zamani, in his accounts.[16] From his accounts we know that :

"On 7 June 1615 AD, by the mediation of the Jesuit Javier, Mukarrab Khan and Gonzalo Pinto da Fonseca had signed a preliminary treaty of peace, which it was agreed, should be submitted to the great Mogul and the Viceroy respectively for ratification within fifty days. Amongst other things, it provided that the English should be expelled from Surat.... The Portuguese effects which had been confiscated were to be restored after deducting 70,000 xerafins as compensation for the merchandise seized by the Portuguese, and the

latter were to present a ship to the Queen Mother in lieu of the one they had burnt at Gogo..."[17]

The accounts of these contemporary writers throw enough light, on the trading activities of Jahangir's mother, Jodha Bai. Due importance and respect was given by the Mughal Emperors to the trading activities of these important Royal Women of the Mughal harem, and all possible arrangements were made to provide them with the best trading facilities and to protect also their vessels and their merchandise.

Jagat Gosain, one of Jahangir's Hindu wives, was the daughter of Raja Udai Singh of Jodhpur, and who was the mother of Prince Khurram later crowned Emperor Shahjahan, did not directly contribute towards the economic posterity but she is said to have founded a village named Sohagpura where the ruins of her palace and tomb are still found. This village was a manufacturing centre made famous because of the fine glass bangles they made which were quite popular among the married and unmarried women and which were considered auspicious by the different colours that were worn.[18]

THE COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES OF NUR JAHAN BEGUM:

Other than Jodha Bai, Emperor Jahangir's mother, and on a much larger scale than her, it was Jahangir's last wife, the illustrious Nur Jahan Begum, who took a very active part in trade and commerce of her times. Just as in other fields of education, art and architecture, literature and even in politics, Nur Jahan's role and participation in the economic field too was quite substantial and

considerate than any other Mughal women of the royal household except perhaps for Princess Jahanara, the eldest daughter of Emperor Shahjahan.

Nur Jahan's commercial activities, unlike her mother-in-law, Jodha Bai, were not confined to sea trade alone. She was famous and was supposed to have built market-places and sarais, owned ships that carried on a flourishing sea trade and even had coins struck in her name. No other Muslim Women enjoyed this status and privilege of having coins struck in their name. Nur Jahan's coins were made of gold and bore the twelve zodiac signs, one sign on each coin.[19] How much of an economic transaction was carried on by these coins is not clearly known but Manucci called them "current money"[20], whereas Pelsaert strongly denied that they were so.[21]

Nur Jahan had unlimited wealth and it surrounded her because she was the pivot of the Mughal administration of Jahangir's time and the whole administrative establishment revolved around her. Apart form the wealth that was lavished on her by her Emperor-husband , she received a lot of 'nazrs' or offerings from many people who wished to please her in order to obtain or gain favors form her. Nur Jahan possessed vast jagirs, one of them being that of Ramsar, 20 miles south east of Ajmer [22] The pargana of Toda, 80 kms south of Ajmer on the trade route from Surat to Ajmer, and with an annual revenue and turnover of 2 lakhs of rupees, were given to her by Jahangir as apart of the celebrations of Shahjahan's conquest in the Deccan.[23] Beni Prasad observes that, "If she, (Nur Jahan) could have been admitted to the order of mansabdars, her jagirs alone would have

entitled her to the rank of 30000."[24] But Nur Jahan was never known to waste this money that she had. With it she undertook a lot of charitable works and built many great monuments. It can rightly be said that she invested a large amount from her personal accounts in carrying out a profitable trade.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF SARAIS :

Nur Jahan constructed sarais too, as part of her architectural skills, the most famous of her sarais being the Nur Mahal Sarai in Jalandhar. This sarai was built around 1620 AD and Nur Jahan bore the complete expenses of its construction.[25] This sarai was situated 16 miles south of Jalandhar, 25 miles south east of Sultanpur and 13 miles west of Phalor. This sarai was a famous one and could accommodate a large number of people. Jahangir speaks about this sarai in his memoirs.[26] Nur Jahan constructed another sarai again by the name of Nur Mahal Sarai near Agra. This sarai, as mentioned by Peter Mundy, in his accounts, could accommodate two to three thousand travellers and 500 horses.[27]

HANDICRAFTS AND ORNAMENTAL DESIGNING :

Nur Jahan Begum's interests, talents and ontributions in different areas are well known in the fields of dressing style, textiles and fabrics, carpet and jewellery designing. All her innorative methods in these fields encouraged craftsmen and artisans, especially the craftsmen engaged in such tpes of works. During her reign, because of her encouragement, in Agra there seems to have existed a whole market called the Kinari Bazaar, where craftsmen, were

engaged in the manufacture of the famous 'kimkhab' textile. The dress-making, carpet-making and jewellery-designing and making industries also got a fillip and a boost under her able guidance and innovations. Many more skilled craftsmen also got employment in these industrial units.

Nur Jahan carried out sea trade with foreign lands with a lot of enthusiasm and vigour. She owned a number of ships. Her chief agent in her activities concerning foreign trade was her brother Asaf Khan.[28] Her ships too plied their trade between Surat and the Arabian Coasts. Nur Jahan was a very intelligent and astute woman. She realized that the tensions and rivalry that existed between the Mughals and the Portuguese would prevent her ships from taking her goods to foreign lands. So she tried to curry favour with the English so that she could send her goods out on English ships.[29] According to Thomas Roe and John Fryer :

"The one and twentieth at this instant, came unto me from Asaph Cahn, a servant in the name of Noormahal, that she had moved the Prince for another 'firman', and that she had obtained it, and was readie to send down her servant with that, to see and take order for our good establishment, that she would see that we should not be wronged."[30] Indigo and embroidered cloth were the main arcitles of foreign trade undertaken by Nur Jahan.[31]

An active interest in internal trade was also shown by Nur Jahan. Through the river Jamuna in Agra, a number of articles which were manufactured in Agra were sent to other parts of the

country and in the same way many articles of trade and commerce entered Agra through this route. While describing the city of Agra, Pelsaert, in his accounts, wrote that Nur Jahan Begum had offices there which "collect duties on all these goods before they can be shipped across the river, and also on innumerable kinds of grain, butter and other privisions, which are produced in the Eastern provinces and imported thence."[32] De Laet too, in his description of Sikandra metions....." Hither are brought all kinds of merchandise form Purob, Bengal, Purbet and Bouten (Bhutan); these pay dues to the Queen before they are taken across the river."[33]

THE COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY JAHAN ARA BEGUM:

During Shahjahan's reign, his eldest daughter Jahan Ara Begum was the sole royal woman who showed any interest or participated whole-heartedly in the prosperous trade and commerce of those times. Jahan Ara's mother (and Shahjahan's favorite wife, Mumtaz Mahal), though an influential lady of the Royal Court and the seraglio, did not evince any interest in commerce and trade. But there stands a flourishing and prosperous place after her name, Mumtazabad, wich Shahjahan had built to immortalize her memory after her untimely death. This city of Mumtazabad was built in twelve years, 1631-1642 AD at a cost of 50 lakhs of rupees and apart from many buildings, had also many markets and inns.[34] Inns and buildings were also built by many other private merchants. But other than the name, Mumtaz Mahal did not contribute anything else to it. In the course of time, the city of Mumtazabad merged with the older

city of Agra, but the most famous of all its buildings, the world-renowned, Taj Mahal, still stands there. Another wife of Shahjahan, Akbarabadi Mahal seems to have built a sarai.[35] But it was only Jahan Ara Begum who participated actively and contributed largely towards the economy of those days.

REVENUES GENERATED THROUGH SARAIS, JAGIRS AND RIVER AND SEA - PORTS :

The famous caravansarai known as the caravansarai of Begum Saheb or the Begum Sarai , was built by the Princess Jahan Ara. It was built in Delhi and many foreigners like Thevenot, Taverneir, Bernier and Manucci speak of it in their accounts. Provisions was made in it, for adequate safety of travellers and merchants, the gates being closed at night. This caravanserai was in fact built to accommodate the wealthy Persian, Uzbek and other foreign traders and merchants.[36] The Begum Sarai was destroyed after the Sepoy Mutiny.[37] This Sarai, no doubt, with its special amenities encouraged merchants to carry on commerce and trade between different places through Delhi. Princess Jahan Ara, like Nur Jahan before her, built caravansarais and market places, engaged in sea trade and on the whole took an active interest in commerce and trade. Again, like Nur Jahan Begam, she owned many jagirs, the revenues of which came to her, apart form the annual allowances given to her by her doting father and the gifts that she received from other sources. Some of her jagirs were Panipat[38], Achchol,[39] Bachchol[40], Safipur,[41] Dohraba,[42] and Farjahara.[43] The revenue of the flourishing Surat port was given to the Princess for her expenditure of betel which she provided for her

entire household, and the revenue of the Sarkar of Dohraha was given to her for the maintenance and upkeep of her gardens.[44] The Pargana of Panipat yielded an annual revenue of one crore dams.[45] Since princess Jahan Ara had great influence in her father's administration, many people, even foreigners tried to please her through valuable gifts and presents in order to gain favours with her. The Dutch sought her mediation and intervention to solve their problems.[46] The English too tried to please her with gifts like broad cloth, embroidered materials, mirrors, perfumed oils, cabinets etc[47] Tavernier speaks of presenting the Princess with many gifts.[48]

FOREIGN TRADE AND COMMERCE :

Jahan Ara Begum invested all her wealth wisely in conducting a flourishing foreign trade and also got back in return huge profits. She owned a large number of ships and established friendly commercial relations with the Dutch and the English. Their friendly co - operation helped her to carry on an extensive trade and make huge profits"[49] Manucci estimated her income to 30 lakhs of rupees a year apart from the precious stones and jewels owned by her.[50] The largest and the most famous of Jahan Ara Begum's ships was the 'Sahebi' after Begum Saheb, a very popular title given to Jahan Ara Begum. This ship was constructed at Surat, from where it operated and embarked on many voyages. It was customary for the Emperor himself to appoint the captain, the crew and other officials of the ship such as Darogha and Munshrif. But Princess Jahan Ara, once was known to have left the appointment of the captain and the crew of her ship to her officials. But in the next year she herself made the

appointment of the Darogha of the ship and Muhammed Raji was given the post.[51] This ship was employed to assist Haj pilgrims[52] as well as for gains. The 'Sahebi', on her maiden voyage on 29th November 1643 AD was reserved for pilgrims to Mecca and Medina. Jahan Ara also issued orders that every year 50 koni of rice was to be dispatched by the ship for distribution among the needy and destitute of Mecca. Pilgrims were not charged any fare, but they were warned against carrying the merchandise and cargo of other merchants in their own names.[53] Merchants with their cargo were also permitted to travel on it though the 'naul' (or freight) collected from them was given away in alms. The Princess's cargo that was carried on this vessel was worth 10 to 15 thousands of rupees. The goods were usually shipped to Jeddah. The Treasurer of the ship was in charge of keeping in his custody the amount received form the freight and also the money got from the sale of the Princess's cargo. The ship's captain was given instructions to bring as many horses as he was able to procure at Jeddah, Arabia, 'The Sahebi' is known to have operated till 1663 AD.[54] Gunjawar, another ship, which was originally owned by Shahjahan and given to Princess Jahan Ara in December 1629 A.D. along with valuable goods like instruments, drugs, fabrics, precious stones etc. This ship also operated form Surat.[55]

THE CONSTRUCTION OF MARKET PLACES AND BAZAARS :

To Princess Jahan Ara Begum goes the credit of building two famous market places, one at Delhi and the other at Lahore. These market places became the most important commercial centres of those cities where merchants came even from foreign lands with their

merchandise. In Lahore Jahan Ara Begum supervised and planned the building of the Chowk Sarai Bazaar.[56] The famous Chandni Chowk built around 1650 A.D. in Delhi was also a contribution of Princess Jahan Ara.[57] "It is situated opposite the Lahore Gate of the Red Fort, Delhi. There was a pool in the centre of the Chandni Chowk, fed by the water of Ali Mardan's canal flowing near by. On moonlit nights the whole complex and the pool shimmering in silvery moonlight gave it its name Chandni Chowk."[58] At each end of the Chandni Chowk there was a magnificent ornamented gate. During the time of the Mughals, Chandni Chowk was a famous, flourishing and bustling trade-centre, "Where traders came from all parts of Hindustan and also from abroad. Each shop specialized in a particular commodity. There were jewellery shops selling exquisite ornaments and rare gems and pearls. There were fruit shops selling choicest fruits from Afghanistan and Kashgar. Some shops sold fine wines, some sold ornamented hookahs and decoration-materials. There were shops even selling different kinds of birds and pet animals. Many of the articles sold here were rare and costly. The wealthy and the nobles often visited the Chandni Chowk for shopping."[59] Chandni Chowk continues, ever today, to be one of the busiest commercial centres of the capital, Delhi.

THE ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS FO THE ROYAL LADIES DURING THE TIMES OF AURANGZEB:

The construction of Sarais : During Aurangzeb's time there seems to have been no royal woman who took an active interest in the commercial actitivites of the Mughals, but Aurangzeb's second

daughter, the kind-hearted and charitable Zinat-un-nisa Begum built fourteen caravan sarais for poor and needy travelers and merchants.[60] Then there was also Aurangzeb's wife Nawab Bai who is said to have built a sarai at Fardapur.[61] Other than these two women, it is difficult to say whether any other royral women of the Mughal Era, contributed in any way towards the economic field.

This brief survey of the commercial activities, interests and contribution of the Mughal ladies from Babar's time to Aurangzeb's time reveal that even in the complex and intricate field of economy, the royal women of the Mughal Era, if it at all they came forward and participated, they did it with enthusiasm and a lot of interest. They invested large amounts of money in trade and commerce and got back many more times as returns in the form of gains and profits. Also, their work of building market places and sarais and possessing their own ships carrying on external trade, certainly helped them in the existing procedures of trade and commerce. Perhaps, only a few royal women came forward to take part in the commercial activities of the time, still, the few that came forward left a lasting impression in the male-dominated field of economy.

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Chapter - 13

POSITION OF LOWER AND MIDDLE CLASS WOMEN

Chapter – 13

STATUS OF MIDDLE AND LOWER CLASS WOMEN

The women in ancient India had a highly respectable position in society. But after the advent of Muslims in India, because of their highly male dominated society and ideas, the position of women in India became very shaky and their position gradually started deteriorating and slowly pushed into the status of second rate citizens. Some section of the society, no doubt, had some regard for the women.[1] But there were other people who always grumbled about women and who believed that women were largely responsible for rain the males.[2]

A girl in a Hindu family was taught right from the beginning that she should respect all the members in the family and especially towards elder members, she was told and trained give utmost respect.

She was asked to worship her husband like God and she was expected to obey him totally and always.[3] Complete loyalty to the husband was expected of her and she was supposed to support him and stand by him in all times of difficulties.[4] Leading a life of total chastity was her foremost duty and 'Pavitra Dharma.'[5]

All her activities were supposed to be within her house. She was expected to do all her household works.[6] She would rise early in the morning and grind corn. Later on she cooked food and she herself

had to serve it.[7] She has to bring water from the well.[8] She was expected to follow the Pativrata Dharma, which meant complete loyalty and devotion to her husband. She was expected to live a totally chaste life.

A woman's domain is her house and all her activities are supposed to be within the four walls of her house. She has to mud plaster the floor and sweep the house. In her leisure hours, she spin and made cloths.[9] Thus she was supposed to be busy the whole day, always occupied in one duty or the other.

The Problem of Dowry : The custom of dowry existed from time immemorial. Because of this evil custom many times it became very difficult to get the girls married. Dowry was the amount of articles that the girl's parents were supposed to give to the boy. It consisted of jewels, furniture, elephants, horses, maids and other articles. It was an old custom. In the beginning it was voluntary. Later on it became a compulsory thing for the bride's parents. This system was very common then and it is exists even now, both in the lives of the rich and ordinary people. In earlier days it existed only in the Brahmin Society. The nature and quantity of dowry depended upon the economic standard of the bride's family. Foreign travellers have noticed this peculiar custom with great surprise and curiosity.[10]

In the case of dowry, usually it eas the bridegroom's side that received the benefits. But in some cases the reverse of it was also possible. In this case, it was the side of the bride that receive the benefit. The system of the girl's side receiving the benefit was in

existence among the lower class of people. It is even now practiced in parts of Uttara Pradesh and Bihar. The case of the bride receiving the benefits is more common if the bridegroom is aged and if the groom desired to marry a young girl. In this regard, it was a practice in those days to purchase young girls.[11] The evil of dowry was more prevalent in Bengal. Its intensity was also high. In some cases, the bride's parents even offered the younger sister of the bride instead of dowry or as part of the dowry.[12]

Child Marriages : In the Mughal period, child-marriage were very common. In fact, society had, in a way, accepted it. Usually, girls were married of before the age of ten.[13] This evil practice of child marriage was practiced among both Hindus and Muslims. Among the Hindus, daughters were married even before they were able to speak a few words. Among the Muslims, daughters were married off at a very young age as compared to male off-springs.[14] Manucci writes that the normal age for the marriage of the daughter of Brahmins was four to five years. In some rare cases, the marriage of a boy would be postponed for upto ten years, but never beyond ten years. Particularly refers to the Muslims saying "The Mohamedan Indians marry very young, but the idolaters at all ages."

Child Birth : Foreigners noticed that child-birth is taken in a casual and easy way by the Indian women. After giving birth, the very next day they would start their work. If by chance they gave birth to a child on a journey, the very next day they were ready to continue their journey with the new-born baby.[15] But this type of taking the

child birth easily was prevalent only among the low-class and poor people.

Sati : From a Hindu woman's point of view, the greatest tragedy that could fall on a woman, was the death of her husband. Among the Muslims, re-marriage was permitted, where as among the Hindus it was not permitted, except in the very low-class of people.[16] Careri says that the low class Hindus, like washermen, fishermen, etc allowed their widows to remarry. A widow was treated with great of contempt and scorn by her own family-members which made the life of a widow unbearable. So she chose to burn herself on the pyre of her husband.[17] This was considered a highly respectable death for the woman concerned. This practice of the wife committing suicide was called 'Sati' A widow who did not perform Sati was looked down by society.[18] A widow was not allowed to grow her hair long and she was forbidden from wearing beautiful clothes and ornaments.[19] People considered that widowhood was a punishment imposed by God upon the widow because of the sins committed by her in her previous births.[20] A woman who committed 'Sati' voluntarily was an ancient custom.[21] But many times they were forced to undergo 'sati' much against their wishes.[22] Women of the Brahmin, Kshatriya and Baniya community normally performed Sati. Almost all foreigners have testified about the prevalence of this system of 'Sati'[23] Still there were many women who defused to commit Sati[24] About 'Sati' William Fitch (1553-91) writes as follows : " When the husband dies, his wife, if she be alive, is buried with him, if she will not, her hair is shaven and then is never any account made of her after.

Withington referring to the Sati system, cites the instance of a girl-widow not more than ten years old. De Laet says : " When her husband dies, the widow, of her own free will, leaps upon the pyre of his and is burnt together with his corpse, is a well-known fact" Pelsaert observes, "when a Rajput dies, his wives allow themselves to be burnt alive as is the practice among the Baniyas and Kshatriyas and in Agra. This commonly occurs two or three times a week. He also writes that once in the company of a young American friend, he rescued a widow from being burnt, and his friend baptized her and married her.

Pelsaert says, "There are hundreds and even thousands who do not do it." Bernier says : "The accounts given of it have been certainly exaggerated, and the number of victims is less now than formerly, the Mohamedans doing all in their power to suppress the barbarous custom.."

Just like Sati, Jauhar was performed by women. This was widely prevalent in Rajaputana. Whenever a Rajput chief and his soldiers were sure of their defeat, they themselves locked up their women and children and set fire and saw to it that they were killed. Afterwards they boldly went to the battle field, fought valiantly and died, thereby doing their utmost, for the mother-land.[25]

Abul Fazl refers to this (fatal) evil custom performed by the Rajputs of Chittor on its fale. "For it is an Indian custom that when such a calamity has occurred, a pile is made of sandal wood, aloes etc as large as possible and to add to this dry firewood and oil. Then

they leave hard heartened confidents in charge of their women. As soon as it is certain that there has been a defeat and that the men have been killed these adamant ones reduce the innocent women to ashes.

Some of the Mughal emperors sincerely tried to ban this evil practice. Akbar had clearly issued orders to the effect that women should never be forced to Sati.[26]

Badauni says, "If a Hindu woman wished to be brunt with her husband, they should not prevent her. But she should not be forced against her will" Jahangir had also prohibited Sati. He had given instructions to the effect that it should never be performed without the specific permission of the king. It should be more strictly adhered to, if the person involved is a young lady.[27] Jahangir could not succeed in preventing the custom of Sati in Agra.

Aurangzeb issued orders in 1663 AD banning Sati.[28] Manucci says "Aurangzeb issued orders that in all lands under the control of Mughals, officials should never allow the burning of a woman. Sometimes those women who did not have children were allowed to perform Sati, whereas those who had children were never allowed to perform Sati.[29] Manucci says that the principal wife of a Rajput Raja who had sons, was not allowed to perform Sati. This was to maintain the family-line. Despite their best efforts the Mughals were not able to totally eradicate the Sati system.

PURDAH : Purdah was observed mainly by Muslim women. It was not so strict in the case of Hindu women.[30] Strictly putting on the veil was

very common among the Muslims. When the Turks came to India, Hindu women also followed put to on the veil, in order to ward off the evil eyes of the foreigners. It is natural for a human being to imitate his rulers. As the ruling Muslim class observed Purdah, Hindu women also started to observe it. The system of Purdah and its observance has been described by almost all foreigners who visited this country in those days.[31] Purdah was confined mainly to the rich and well-to-do classes.[32] Regarding this de Laet writes "The Mohemadan women do not come out into the public without veils unless they are poor or immodest. They always put on veils without fail." Pietra Della Valle says, "For these Muslim ladies unless they are immodest or very poor, they never come out of their houses without veils. Further he says that Mohammadans never allowed their wives to talk even to their close male relatives in their absence. Manucci writes that the Mohammadans considered it as a great dishonour to the entire family if the women did not observe Purdah." There not writes that if the women are Hindus, they go without Purdah. If they are Muslims, they will observe Purdah, Careri observes, "Mohamaten women never appear in public unless they are the vulgar sort or lewd ones. They always cover their heads." Hamilton writes : "The Mohemmadan women always go veiled", Barbosa says that every Mohemmadan has three or four wives. They keep them carefully shut up. Bowry says that Bengalis did not allow their wives and concubines to go abroad. They kept them under the care of eunuchs.

Even Badauni refers to it, " And if a young woman were found running about the lanes and bazaars of the town and while so doing

either did not veil herself or allowed herself to be in veil.... She was to go to the quarters of the prostitutes and take up the profession.

Poor women were largely labourers and therefore, they were unable to observe Parda.[33]

Property Rights of Women : Some women were Zamindars who owned land. There were some women who had Milkiyat rights and some women who owned Inam lands also. As far as property was concerned they could have it by inheritance also. Women had the liberty to sell and dispose off their properties in whatever way they wanted.[34] A woman named Sabhanu sold her village Debidaspur in about 1681 AD.[35] There was another woman named Bhikan who owned two villages, called Baidaura and Baidauri in the year 1672 AD.[36] Similar types of references may be found at many places, if we search contemporary records.[37]

Many farmers were issued in those days in regard to the grants of lands, gardens and sarais by women. Inayatulla Vakil had sold a plot of land that belonged to his wife Bibi Rakhi (he had sold it on behalf of his wife) to Mir Gulam Haider.[38] Similarly, Bibi Sukhi sold a plot of land which was situated in Kol, for two hundred rupees. The transfer on her behalf, had been done by Abdur Razak.[39] Sheikh Sadulla, had sold a garden on behalf of his mother Bibi Saba for rupees one hundred and another one to Sheik Mohammad Yusuf of Kol. Similarly Abdul Razak had sold a Sarai on behalf of his mother Sakhi for two hundred rupees.[40] All these instances show that women owned property and they had the right to deal with their property in any way they desired.

Some women had also received grants of lands in the form of Madad-i- Maash.[41] Madad-i- Masah was an act of charity . They were given to the learned, religious or destitute persons who had no capacity to work. They were also given to people of noble lineage. Women also received it. Abul Fazl says Turani and Irani women held grants. A special sister of Jahangir's father was in charge of grants to women.

Two bhigas of land was given to Khatoon as Maddad-i- Maash in the 41st regnal year of Aurangzeb.[42] Fortyfive beings of land was conferred on Maham Begum in the same Paragana.[43] Achhi Bibi owned 18 bhigas of Pukka land as Madad -i- Maasha (1739 AD).[44] In the reign of Farrkshiyar eighty five bighas of land in Paragana was conferred as Madad-i- Maash to a woman named Aisha.[45]

Two bighas of land in Jalali paragana was conferred as Maddad-i-Maash on another woman named Shah Bibi.[46] In this way, many farmans can be cited to show that women owned lands.

Religion : Women, in general are more religious than men. Both Hindu and Muslim women were equally religious. A Hindu woman observes a number of fasts, she visits temples and is fond of books on Religion. Similarly a Muslim woman reads the Quran, offers prayers called 'Namaz' and also observes a number of fasts. Both communities celebrated their religious festivals with fervour and enthusiasm.

There were some women who devoted themselves completely to religion and later became Sanyasins. The sister of Sheikh

Fariduddin, Bibi Fatima Saiman, and mother of Nizamuddin Aulia and Bibi Zulekha were some religious women.[47] Another woman named Bibi Nauni. Who sold tobacco for a living. Later she renounced the world and became a great mystic.[48] [The story concerning her goes like this : Once a saint named Shah Naga, happened to pass in front of her shop. She gave him some tobacco. Soon after he left her shop, she felt a peculiar sensation and urge. She immediately followed him and went to his monastery. The saint was very angry and told her to go away, but she did not leave. After some days she got some mystic vision and obtained the highest degree of mysticism.

A woman in the harem of Guru Govind Singh, named Mata Sundari, had established a monastery of her own, and later many Sikhs came to join her monastery.[49] From these examples can be seen that many women renounced the world, embraced the religious way of life and got themselves totally involved in the search eternal truth.[50] [There is a painting which shows a Yogini in the company of the women of the court]

Education : In the early days, the girls of middle class families were not given much education. Only some of them were had a little education by way of tuitions. This they get by going to the houses of elderly lady teachers.[51] Sometimes the father of the girl himself taught her.[52] In many instances, the girls of poor families were not given any education at all. In some other cases, the Mullah of that area collected together the girls and gave them a minimum amount of education.[53] Many times, Some Pandits of the area also taught in their Pathashalas.[54] The subjects taught were subjects of daily use,

such as needle work, embroidery, cooking and other household works.[55]

On the whole the education of girls from ordinary middle class and low class families was not at all wide spread. There were no separate schools for girls and even if there were some, they were never regular.[56] Earlier among the lower classes, boys and girls were studied together. But the strict Purdah system was a great hindrance in the cause of education of girls. The education of intelligent girls was cut short on account of the early marriage of these girls.[57]

Literary Activities : In the Mughal period, much importance was not given to the education of women. Despite such discouragements, many women of their own accord, developed literary tastes and indulged in literary activities. Many of them were inspired from the existing Literature and started their own literary activities. They enriched the literary world by their fine and commendable works. If we study the Literature of those times, we come to know that women had contributed fairly well in the field of Literature, both in terms of quality and in terms of quantity. The works of women-writers of the period of Mughals can be divided into three groups : a) Literature devoted to devotion (Bhakti cult. In this, they composed verses in praise of Lord Rama or Krishna b) Poems and literary works in praise of physical beauty of women and c) Literary works and pieces on a variety of subjects and matters. But, most of their works were works connected with God and with the praising of the Lord.

Saint Poetesses : A number of poetesses were influenced by the Nirguna (without form) aspect of the Lord. The subjects they dealt with were usually, the importance of the Guru in the quest of eternal truth, adulation of famous saints and gurus, and about the importance of gaining knowledge etc. They were capable of expressing their feelings exceedingly well. In their verses on the Lord, we can easily see their yearning for God.

Pran Nath was a the poet of the sixteenth century. He has composed many fine Dohas 1549 AD.[58] His wife Indramati too was a saint and poetess and has written a number of fine verses. She is one of the earlier poets of those times.

In the reign of Akbar also, there were a number of poetesses. Ganga and Jamuna, good writers of that time were the disciples of Hit-Ji. Others of the women writers were Kalmashi Devi, Rani Rar Dhari and Narla Devi,[59] but details about them are not available.

This breed of good poets continued afterwards and continued upto the eighteenth century. Among the important poets, mention many be made of Daya Bai, who was the disciple of Charan Das. She composed her poems during the middle of the eighteenth century. Two of her works which are available even now are "Daya Bodh" and 'Vinaya Mallika.'[60] Sahjo Bai was a contemporary of Daya Bai and she too was a disciple of Charan Das. One of her books is 'Sahaj Prakash which is even available now. This is a book which tells about the importance of a good teacher and the qualities of a required saint.[61]

The Poetesses of Krishnait School:

Sugun Bhakti consistes of two kinds of Schools. The Krishnait School and the Ramaite School. Krishna was a charming personality and on many young girls and women were attracted to him. They were mad after him and loved him very deeply. Since they had both, Bhakti and love towards him, some of the talented among them composed many beautiful poems on him, praising him and surrendering to him totally. Meera Bai of the sixteenth century, was a great devotee of Krishna and composed a number of poems, keertans and songs expressing her intense love and devotion to Lord Krishna. Meera Bai had been married to Kumbha who was the ruler of Udaipur.[62] Meera has composed many poems in praise of Lord Krishna. The following works by her are popular even today (1) Narssiji ka Mahra 2) Gita Govinda ki Tika 3)Rag Govinda 4) Garva Geet 5) Shputa pad 6) Meera ke pad. Her verses are easy to understand, very simple but with profound meaning and Several are set to music.[63]

They have been composed in the Rajastani, Braj and Gujarati languages.

Another poet of this same School of Art was Bavri Saheb. She was a contemporary of Akbar and a disciple of Bhayanand. She adored the Lord so intensely that people used to say that she was really a Bhavri. (mad). She had a good command both Hindi and Urdu.[64] She has composed a good number of verses and Geetas.

A third poetess of this School was Ganga Bai. She lived in Mahavan (near Mathura). She was a disciple of Vitthal Das.[65] Much details about her are not known. She was a worshipper of the child form of Krishna. She has written an independent literary work known as "Ganga Bai ke Pad". Some of her works are in the collection of works of 'Pushtimarg' saints.

Son Kumari was yet another poetess of the sixteenth century. She was a princess of the Ambar family. Her work titled "Swaran Beli-ki- Kavita" is quite famous.[66]

A woman named 'Taj' was a another famous poetess of this period. She lived in the seventeenth century. Other details of her life are not available. She lived in a village called Karoli.[67] Even though she was a Mohammadan, she worshipped Lord Krishna. She wrote many poems in the Braj language. As far as literary competence is concerned, she stands next only to Meera Bai.[68]

A number of poetesses came and flourished under the Krishna School f Thought. The main theme of their poetry was their intense love for Lord Krishna and singing and praying his almost never-ending lories. From the art point of view they were very successful. Some of the poetry such of as Meera Bai and Tai were simply superb.

The Poetesses of Ramait School:

In this School there is the reference of only one poetess. This school was not as popular as the Krishnait School, because in the Krishnite School there is maximum freedom for poets and there is

much scope for the expressions of the feelings and yearning. Rama was a highly-principled man and in fact, he has been called 'Maryada Purushottama.' So there is not much freedom in expressing love or other emotional feelings. As he is an ideal man, enormous restraint would have to be shown to compose poems on him.

The only poetess in this school is Madhura Ali. She emerged in the later half of the sixteenth century and was a fine poetess. She lived in Orchha when this kingdom was ruled by Madhukar Shah.[69] It is surprising to note that in a feudal kingdom known for grandeur and splendor, instead of dwelling in romance and beauty, she composed devotional hymns and songs that were full of adultations of the great Lord. Some of her works are "Ram Charit", and "Ganesh Dev Leela". But none of them are available now.

There was an excellent poetess in Bengal called Chandrawati. She was the daughter of a famous poet Bamsidas. She composed a Ramayana which is famous for its originality and poetic beauty. [70]

The Poetesses of Reeti Kavya : During the period of Mughals, a unique style of poetry was developed, especially in the Hindi language. That style was used to describe the physical beauty of women. The people who followed this theme and wrote poems in that style and fashion were called Reeti poets. Some women were also attracted towards this style and began writing poems in that style. Such poems were known as Shringar poetry. The authors worth mentioning are Praveen Rai Patur, Rup Mati, Teen Tarang and

Rangarejin. in the latter half of sixteenth century and in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Praveen Rai Patur was a singer and dancer in the court of Raja Indrajeet, and developed her art while in service of the court. Raja Indrajeet was her patron and encouraged her to a great extent. He himself was a good musician.[71] Praveen was a poetess also and she herself song her own composition. It is said that she has written a good number of songs and poems, but unfortunately her works are not available. From whatever is available, we can note her class and caliber in the art of writing poems and songs. She had originality and was a real a genius.[72]

Rup Mati was yet another poetess of this line of thinking. She was a daughter of a Prostitute at Sarangapur near Ujjain. Detailed information about her is not available.[73]

Teen Tarang was yet another poet. Her patron was Raja Madhukar Shah of Orchha.[74]

The cast in that line was Sheikh Rangrejin. She was a Mulim and belonged to the profession of dyers.[75] To make a living, she dyed clothes. She must have had free access to the Mughal court and frequently visited the Royal Court of Prince Muazzam.[76] She was married to a man called Alam. He also had poetic talents and therefore both of them wrote poems. Their verse was mostly in the Braj language. In her poems, she used many words from Arabic and Persian languages.[77] Her collection of poems is in book from titled. 'Alam Keli'. This book is a fine example of Shringar Ras .[78]

Poetesses of Diverse subjects : Apart from the above mentioned, poets, there were some poets who wrote poems on a variety of subjects. Their subjects were morality, duty of women devotion towards husbands etc. The first in this category, was Ratnawali, the wife of the famous saint-poet Tulsidas. She has composed many couplets. [79]

Another poetess was Khaganiya, who was quite famous in the seventeenth century. Her birth place is a village near Unnao. She has composed many riddle types of poems which are even now very popular.[80]

Keshava Das was a famous poet of the seventeeth century. His daughter-in-law was also a good poetess. But unfortunately much information is not available about her. She has constructed her poems in the meter known as 'Savaiyya."[81]

Loknath Chaube was in the court of Budh Singh, the king of Bundi. His wife called Kavi Rani Chaube was a fine poetess and has composed a great number of poems. She composed her poems towards the end of the seventeenth century.[82]

Apart from these, some women in Rajasthan also wrote poems. They composed verses in 'Dingal'. Dingal poetesses lived in places where they served their masters/mistnesses such as kings and queens and entertained them also.[83] Among them was Champa De Rani. Her husband was Prithviraj, the brother of the king of Bikarner. He was also a poet. Champa Rani helped her husband in writing his poems. She has written a number of poems but unfortunately, they

are not available now.[84] She lived towards the end of the sixteenth century.

Padma Charini was another poetess of the 'Dingal' style.[85] She also lived towards the close of the sixteenth century. Her father Charan Mal Sahu. Her husband was Bharat Shankar. For her livelihood, she served in the palace of Bikarner.[86]

Kak Rechi Ji was another poet. She was quite famous during the period of Shahjahan. Her father was one Thakur Baghela Aggra Ji and her husband was Nahar Narhar Das of Marwar. Durug the reign of Shahjahan, he died in a war.[87] It is said that her father-in-law, husband and sons served under Shahjahan.

Another poetess named Nathi has also composed a number of verses. She was a devotee of Lord Vishnu. She was fairly well known in the period of Aurangazeb.[88]

All the above were poetesses of the Dingal Style. They composed devotional songs. In general, 'Shringar' was the main theme in their works. From the points of scholarship and literary excellence, all the above works cannot be rated very high.[89]

On the whole the efforts of the women in the Hindi Literature world to enrich the Literature is quite commendable. Under those circumstances wherein much encouragement for woman in the pursuits of knowledge was not given, what they have done in the field of literature is worth appreciable. But in the 'Prem Margi' School, they did not contribute anything substantial. Many women have contributed much in the field of arts also. Notable personalities in

this are : Sahjo Bai, Daya Bai, Ganga Bai, Sheikh Rangrejin and Praveen Rai. Their contribution can never be ignored.

Women and Learning of Sanskrit.

Women, in particular did not take much interest in the learning of Sanskrit. Sanskrit learning was the domain of the elite males. Women were not encouraged to learn Sanskrit. Therefore they were weak in Sanskrit. But in South India, by virtue of a different tradition, a considerable number of women began to learn Sanskrit. There were many reasons for it. Firstly, the regional languages were gaining importance and this was being liked much by women. There were facilities to learn them and therefore they learnt them easily. Without Sanskrit they could not have made satisfactory progress. Persian was the court-language. On account of some of these hindrances, women could not have a good command in Sanskrit.

However, there was one good Sanskrit poetess of that time. Her name was Priyamvada. She was the daughter of Shiva Ram and her husband was Raghunath. She lived in Faridpur (which is now in East Bengal) in the year 1600 AD. One of her famous poems is "Shyama Rahasya." In an earlier verse she praises Lord Krishna.[90]

DRESS : The common dress of a Muslim woman was a shirt and trouser.[91] There were varied shapes for the trousers. Some wore 'Shalwar' (breeches) and others Ghagra (Loose skirt).[92] Shalwar and ghagra were worn below the shirt. The former was tight and pleated from above. The latter, though pleated from above, was loose at the end. Some women of rich families wore Kashmiri Shawls and

Quabas.[93] While going out of their homes, women covered their heads with a veil.[94] The dress of the Muslim women has been described by foreign travellers.[95] Hamilton visited India during the period of 1688 to 1723. About the dresses of the women he writes as follows : "Their garments differ but little from man's. Their coats serve for both sexes. Shirts are close-bodied. The man's are gathered in pleats below the naval and women's are gathered in a pretty way above to make their waist appear slender. They both wear breeches up to the ankle."

Hindu women wore 'choli' which was a small jacket worn round the chest 7 Below it they wore a sari.[96] Babur described the "Sari" as a cloth one end of which goes round the waist and the other is put over the head as a cover". Tavernier writes, "The dress of women is simple cloth making five or six turns like petticoat form the waist downwards as if they had three or four rounds above the other."

Reference of the Sari comes in Hindi literature quite frequently.[97] Hindu women were very fond of the red colour.[98] Regarding the dress, Manucci says that the dress of the girls up to age of nine or Ten, was more or less the same, as that of the boys. He further adds. "After that time they were a piece of white or red cotton cloth that they bind on like a petty-coat sometimes the 'pane'[99] (that is how they call it) is thrown over the shoulders or the head when speaking to a rank of any position, but when they go to the well or spring to fetch water, and when at work in their houses, they keep the whole 'pane' bound round the waist and thence upwards are naked.[100]

The Bengali women wore a different kind of apparel. They wore saris of fine cloth.[101] The saris were of many patterns such as Mayur Pankhi, Magha Damber, Pater Bhuni, Nilambari, Ganga Jai etc They also wore Kanchuki (Blouse).[102] Kanchukis were of two kinds - One was a short type covering only the breasts and the other was long, coming down the waist. It was tied at the back by ribbons. There were artistic embroidery on the Kanchuk.[103] They also used an under-garment which was similar to a petticoat. Aristocratic families used the 'Ghagrah.'

Among the Rajput women, the popular dress was Lahanga and Choli. Lahanga was a short and loose type of dress. Choli or Angiya was worn on the upper portion. A long scarf was worn to cover the upper part of the body.[104]

Sikh women wore trousers called 'sutan.' [105] It was made up of a of coloured cloth. Many women wore Kurta and a waist-coat.[106] Over the head and shoulder, they wore a 'chadar'. It was coloured or plain. It was made of coarse cloth. It was thick in winter and thin in summer. Sometimes it was dyed cloth, and sometimes embroidered.[107] They also wore Ghagra, Choli and Saris.[108] The clothes for daily use were rough but they were durable and comfortable.[109] The ordinary dyes were indigo for blue and saffron flowers for red and yellow.

About the dress of Gujarati women, Durate Barbosa, who visited India in the first quarter of the 16th century says, " Their dress is as long as that of their husbands. They wear silken bodices

with tight sleeves, cut low at the back and other long garments called 'chandes' (chadar) which they throw over themselves like cloaks when they go out.[110]

The women of Kashmir wore a long gowns reaching down to the feet.[111] They did not use drawers. A type of waist-band is used by both the sexes. Hindu women generally were dresses of dark maroon or blue and fasten a white cloth round their waist.[112] The Muslim women in Kashmir do not wear a girdle and their tunic of richly embroidered.[113] Apart from these, the women denoted a fillet on the forehead and above it they wore a long gown which fell over the head, then on to the shoulders and then falls to the feet.[114] The head-dress of Muslim women was called Qasaba and that of Hindu women called Tarange, which fell up to the heels, behind. [115]

Ornaments : The ornaments used by Hindu and Muslim women were more or less the same. The main difference was the material used and the names for those items. In Bengal the names of these ornaments are different.[116] The head-ornament there is known as "Sinthi" and that of the nose ornament was called 'Besar', or 'Nakh Chabhi.' The names of the ornaments for the ear were, 'Kundal, Kanbala, Hiramar, Salkhadi, Madankadi', ornaments of the neck were, 'Sateshwari, Gribapatra', of the arms 'Tod, Angada, Ananta, Keyura, Maduli and Ratanchud' Ornaments for the 'Unchehat and Ujjhatika.'

Foot Notes:

1. Buhler, *The Laws of Manu*, Oxford, 1886, p.85.
2. Kabir Das, *Bijak*, Bombay, 1961, p.189.
3. Keshav, *Ram Chandrika*, Part I, Allahabad, 2004, p.134.
4. Ibid., p.135.
5. Dadu Dayal, *Dadu Dayal Ki Bani*, Allahabad, 1931, p.95.
6. Roe and Fryer, *Travels in the Seventeenth Century*, London, 1873, p.117-18.
7. Bihari, *Bihari Satsai*, Doha 641, Prayag, 1934, p.255.
8. R. Singh, *Maithili Lok Geet*, Prayag, 1999, p.59.
9. S. Pareek, *Rajasthani Lok Geet*, Prayag, 1999, p.75.
10. Manuui, *Storia Do Mogor*, Vol. III, London, 1907, p.61.
11. Ibid., p.55.
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Chapter - 14

CONCLUSION

Chapter - 14

RESUME AND CONCLUSION

Historically speaking, the Mughal Empire was one of the most extensive and far reaching centralized states ever known in pre modern history. It was established in the near beginning of the 1500s and by the end of the following century, the Mughals ruled almost the complete Indian sub continent with a population of between 100 and 150 millions. Besides military success, the Mughal Emperors displayed immense wealth and the social mores and etiquette, ceremonies, music, poetry and exquisitely carved and executed objects of art and paintings of the Imperial Court fused together, to create a unique and distinctive aristocratic elite culture.

Mughal literary works provide a glance of the religious, socio-economic politics, art and architecture, travellers etc. Chronicles and accounts of foreign traveler and missionaries who came to India during the reign of Akbar, for example, have written on the Mughal harem;. The name of Father Anthony Monserrate is worth mentioning. He worked at his book 'Commentaries.' Monserrate writes about the education of the Mughal princes and princesses. He saw the royal women going on long and arduous journeys and writes about them while on the move and while resting in camps. In the journey of this thesis, it has come to light that in the male-dominated world of medieval India, the birth of a girl child was inauspicious and never a welcome fact. It was considered

inauspicious by both the Hindu as well as Muslim community. Among the Hindu sects, especially among the Rajputs killing of female babies was a common practice. This was prevalent among the poorer section of the society, where a female child was considered to be a great burden on the society, and the hapless women who gave birth to a girl child was made to undergo a rigorous penance.

The way of life of the harem women is also recounted by an Englishman, Edward Terry, who was in Hindustan during Jahangir's time. Accounts of the expenses on the Royal Harem and the Nauroz celebrations are dealt with by William Hawkings, another Englishman and traveller. William Finch, gives us some very interesting facts and goes into details about the mercantile and commercial activities of the Mughal queens and princesses. He describes and tells us about the Lahore Fort and the beautiful Mahals of the royal women living in them. He describes also the Agra Fort and the exotic dancing girls or 'Kanchanis' and their way of life. Another Englishman Sir Thomas Roe, had a fleeting glimpse of the royal women, who were behind the curtain or 'purdah' and attempts a description of their great beauty and refinements. He gives us images of how Nur Mahal (Nur Jahan) went out in a coach covered with golden fabric. Sebastian Manrique and Monsieur de Thevenot, also describe the harem. All these historians and travellers and many others provide fund of information on the Mughal women.

In the history of the Mughal harem, four personalities stand out. They are : Nur Jahan, Mumtaz Mahal, Jahanara and Roshanara.

These four beautiful women represent the quintessence of Mughal feminine ideal. They lent charm, grace and elegance to the harem in the seventeenth century.

Indian women, have since time immemorial, played an important role in the social, cultural and philosophical development of the county. The women of the Mughal times were almost as remarkable as their male counterparts, and in several cases even more refined and cultivated. These beautiful, educated and extremely talented women not only contributed to the social, cultural, literary, artistic and economic fields but also wielded great power and played a dominant role in the contemporary politics of that time.

It is interesting indeed, that behind hidden veils and shut in the four walls of their homes and palaces, these women could attain so much that some of their contributions till today form a part of our rich cultural heritage.

The present study deals with the Mughal women in great detail and is concerned with their achievements and their social activities. It provides a detailed account of the life and contributions of the Mughal women from Babar's time to the time of Aurangzeb, with special emphasis on the most prominent among them.

Mention must be made also of the most outstanding among them like Aisan Daulat Begam and Qutluq Nigar Khanum, the maternal grandmother and mother of Babar, respectively. Then we have Babar's sister Khanzada Begam, Gulbadan Begam, his

daughter; Humayun's wife Hamida Banu Begam; Akbar's nurse Maham Anaga; Akbar's wives Ruquaiya Begam, Salima Sultan Begam and Jodha Bai; the incomparable Nur Jahan, Man Bai and Jagat Gosain, the principal wives of Jahangir; Shah Jahan's immortal wife Mumtaz Mahal; Dara Shukoh's wife Nadira Begam; Aurangzeb's daughters, Zeb-un-Nisa and Zinat un Nisa and a host of others.

One is filled with a feeling of awe and mystery when one thinks of the enigmatic life of the Mughal women who lived inside the Emperor's harem. It does not harm to present their saga of sorrow and joy, pleasure and pain, their longings, disappointments, their hatred, love, ambitions and dreams, their contributions and achievements.

The story of women in Indian history is detailed and lengthy and the history of Indian women in every era has different features and aspects which should be dealt separately and in much detail also, and highlight the many aspects of their eventful and colourful life.

The status of women in Indian society altered considerably with the coming of the Mughal and the introduction of Islam. Indian women now came to occupy an even more demeaning and lower position. Women's education was frowned upon and discouraged. The birth of a female was seen as an unhappy and ill omened event. The women of the noble and royal families, even though confined, enjoyed a better status and standing when compared to the women of the middle and lower classes. Royal and noble women received a good

education and had many opportunities to cultivate their talents, sometimes they played a prominent role in politics. During the reign of the Delhi Sultanate, Razia Sultan, the able and intelligent daughter of Iltutmish became the only woman to have ruled, in the history of the Ibari Sultans. Her reign was short but eventful because of the unparalleled courage and sagacity she displayed and makes her an icon in Indian history.

The Sultanate of Delhi also witnessed other politically ambitious women who played a prominent and conspicuous role in politics like Shah Turkan, one of the wives of Iltutmish. She was the mother of Ruknuddin Firoz. We also hear of the wife of Jalaluddin Khalji's wife Malika- i – Jahan; Muhammad Tughalq's sister Khudavandzada; the principal wife of Bahlol Lodi named Shams Khatun and the Hindu wife of Bahlol Lodi Bibi Ambha, the mother of Sikander Lodi.

The life of a Mughal woman centred round the Emperor. The women at the harem were not treated equally . Their place of respect and authority depended by the place they had in the affections of the Emperor. They shared a mutual relationship and understanding among themselves and outwardly were cordial and even friendly but petty jealousies and rivalries were not uncommon. Each of them did her best to compete for the Emperor's affection and not one wanted to reveal her bad qualities like a bad- tempered attitude, quarrelsome nature or envy and jealousy. To present the Emperor with a first male heir was a matter of great honour and competition. So it was common among them for a jealous woman attempting to abort the

pregnancies of the other women living and residing with her at the harem. Death, worries and other unpleasantness were never mentioned. Only the demise of a harem woman of high position was mourned.

During the era of the Mughals, the First Lady of the Realm was usually, the Emperor's mother and not his principal wife. This was not the case of Nur Jahan or Mumtaz Mahal. Only after the passing away of the Queen Mother did the Chief Consort of the Emperor take her place. All the Mughal Emperors, from Babar onwards loved and respected their mothers. The 'Babur Nama' and 'Humayun Nama' of Gulbadan Begam, reveal many instances of the great respect and honour shown by the Emperors to their mothers.

Besides the biological mothers in the Mughal household, there were also foster- mothers and nurses. Many a time, a young child was separated from his natural mother because of political or personal crises that occurred from time to time. Therefore, the child was placed in the care of a foster mother or nurse. These nurses were known as Anagas and were women of high rank in the harem. Akbar had been separated from his mother Hamida Banu Begum and placed, therefore, in the care of Jiji Anaga, (the wife of Shams –ud- din) ; Fakhr-un-Nisa, Nadim Koka's wife ; Koki Anaga, the wife of Togh Begi, Piji Jan Anaga, Kildar Anaga, Bibi Rupa, Bhawal Anaga and a woman called Hakima. But the most loved of all Babur's nurses was Maham Anaga, who later played an important part during Akbar's initial rule.

Apart from their own mother and foster mothers, the other wives of their father, were also given a lot of respect by the Mughal Emperors. Jahangir's natural mother was Jodha Bai, yet he showed great respect and affection for Ruquaiya Begam and Salima Sultan Begam. Akbar showed a lot of respect towards. Haji Begam. The grandmothers, elderly relations and aunts were greatly - respected and well- looked after and cared for. The respect and affection too, for their sisters was well known Gulbadan Begam mentions in her 'Humayun Nama', the love that Babur and Humayun had for their sisters.

The birth of a girl child was less welcomed than that of boy, but the Mughal Emperors loved their daughters tenderly and made provisions for their education, upbringing and cultivation of their talents. They were brought up in the lap of luxury, yet strangely, especially after the time of Akbar, many of these fine women remained unmarried.

Some of the very important women of the Mughal harem were given titles as a mark of great privilege and respect. Akbar's mother Hamida Banu Begam was conferred with the title of Maryam Makhani (Mary of both Worlds); Jahangir's mother Jodha Bai was bestowed the title of Maryam - uz- Zamani (Mary of the Universe); Shah Jahan's mother Jagat Gosain was given the title Bilqis Makani (the Lady of pure Abode). When Jahangir married Mehrunnisa, he conferred on her the title of Nur Mahal meaning "the Light of the Palace" and later, during the 11th anniversary of his accession to the

throne he changed it to Nur Jahan meaning " the Light of the World". Shah Jahan's favorite wife was Arjumand Banu Begam, she was given the title of Mumtaz Mahal (Queen of the Palace). Other titles that she enjoyed and was privileged to be called was Nawwab Mahd Ulya(Her Majesty the Queen). Shahjahan's favourite daughter way given the most honourable title of Padshah Begum and after her death she was mourned and honoured with the title of Sahibat - uz-Zamani meaning "Mistress of the Age".

The women of the Mughal harem truly led an opulent and lavish life. Important harem women owed a lot of wealth which they spent as extravagantly as they wished. Their splendid lifestyle makes us wonder how these women could spend such great amounts, and what would be the sources of their income and wealth. Obviously, the Mughal women, the queens and princesses and the wives of the noblemen received maintenance grants and allowances to meet their expenses and needs. In addition to their regular allowance some important women of rank of the Mughal household owed vast jagirs which were bestowed on them by the Emperor. So we know that Humayun paid visits to his mother, sisters and other ladies of his seraglio and confirmed their mansabs. Jahangir also bestowed jagirs to all the veiled ladies of his father's harem from 20 percent 100 percent, according to their rank or title. The most number of Jahangir's jagirs were given to Nur Jahan and were owned by her.

The women also received gifts in cash and kind on very special occasions from generous emperors like Akbar and Shah Jahan. On

the birth of his son Prince Daulat Afza, Shah Jahan gave many gifts to the Queen. On the first occasion of Nauroz, after his accession, Shah Jahan showered Mumtaz Mahal "various kinds of precious gems and jewelled ornaments worth 50 lakhs of rupees".

Besides the lavish gifts and presents given by the Emperor, some very important and titled queens received gifts from the foreign ambassadors and merchants who visited India and who tried to please the queens in order to gain favours and seek an audience with the Emperor. It is quite evident that the Mughal women had a lot of wealth at their disposal. The more important place she occupied in the Emperor's life, the wealthier she became. As a result, these women owned lakhs and lakhs of rupees apart from the gold, silver, gems, jewellery and other valuable ornaments they had.

The wealth that the women of the Mughal seraglio amassed and accumulated were spent on fine silks, brocades and muslins from which were stitched and embroidered beautiful and ethereal garments of attire. They also were extremely fond of jewellery which were gem - encrusted and they often brought rare and precious gems from the places they had possession of.

Inspite of the fabulous wealth they had, and the luxurious life they led, paradoxically, many Mughal women of royal birth, engaged themselves in several charitable works. They helped poor people especially the needy women, gave large number of amounts in alms on special religious occasions; they built rest houses and 'sarais' and constructed educational centres and mosques for the use of the

people. Maham Begam , the mother of Humayun, was supposed to have built a masjid called Din Panah in 1561 AD near the fort of Old Delhi. The Pathar Masjid, was constructed by Nur Jahan, which is also known by the name of Shahi Masjid and Nau Masjid at Srinagar, though this mosque was never used by the people for whom it was built. It was later used as a store house. Akbarabadi Mahal, Fatehpuri Mahal and Sarhindi Mahal, three of Shah Janah's secondary wives, built mosques in Delhi. Jahanara, Shah Jahan's daughter too, built a mosque costing rupees 40,000 in Kashmir at her own expenses. This mosque was surrounded by large buildings which were for the habitation of the poor.

" A life without love is no life at all", The women of the Mughal harem led unhappy lives as far as the satisfaction of physical love or desires was concerned. They spent long hours and unending days seeking the love they rarely got. The number of those fortunate ones who got it are very few indeed.

Although the Mughal royal men could seek any forms of pleasures for themselves and could have any number of wives and concubines, their wives were never allowed any such liberty and were expected to be the very epitome of virtue and chastity, they were expected to show complete fidelity to their men. Edward Terry informs us that if these women dishonored their beds, or if being unmarried, were found to be pregnant, their own brothers and fathers would be their executioners for dishonouring the family's name. What the Mughal Emperor failed to see, or ignored the fact was, that the

women living inside their harems were also human beings with desires and wants like any women belonging to other eras.

In the Mughal family, marriages were mainly political affairs but that did not mean that the Mughal Emperor and princes never married for love or that they never fell in love. Babar's marriage to Masuma Sultan Begum(Miran Shahi) was a love match on both sides. Humayun's marriage to Hamida Banu Begum too, was a love match. Hamida Banu Begum was at first, reluctant to marry Humayun, because he was a king and therefore, someone above her status. After a lot of persuasion, she finally agreed to marry him.

Jahangir's love for Nur Jahan is legendary and well-documented. It may be Jahangir loved Nur Jahan the most, but she certainly was not the only love of his life. In his memoirs, he speaks of the deep and abiding love that he had for his first wife Man Bai who had held the title of Shah Begam and mourns her suicidal death. Jahangir's love for a dancing girl, Anarkali in Akbar's harem has become a legend of love and is popular even today.

The love that Shah Jahan had for hi beautiful wife Arjumand Banu Begum has been immortalized by the greatest symbol of marital love in the world – the Taj Mahal, which is her mausoleum. Her untimely death left Shah Jahan a shattered man.

Dara Shukoh, Shah Jahan's son, seems to have inherited his father's quality. He had great love for his wife Nadira Begam Nadira Begam, like Hamida Banu Begam (the wife of Humayun), and

Mumtaz Mahal had shared Dara's days of exile, in days of happiness and misery and was his constant and loyal companion.

From these few instances it was obvious, that all Mughal women were not starved of love. But this love touched the lives of very few women. Those who did not experience this kind of love led a life of frustration, they took to alcohol and drugs and searched for lovers elsewhere.

Women's education, both among the Hindus and Muslims, were not encouraged during the medieval times. The strict rules of 'purdah' and seclusion made it very difficult to obtain education. Muslim girls were given an education of sorts at the primary level in the same school as the boys or in separate 'Madrasas and Maktabs', meant for them. The scope of education became limited once they grew up. Therefore, the middle and lower class women, remained largely uneducated.

The Mughal Emperors who were men of learning, took a keen interest in the education of their children, including their daughters. Though Emperor Akbar had very little formal education, he was very interested in education as a whole. He made arrangements for the imparting of education to the young girls at the Imperial Seraglio. Tutors were hired and these young girls were given training in household activities as well as embroidery. They were also tutored in subjects such as Prose, Poetry, Humanities, Theology and the study of languages like Persian and Arabic. The language of the harem was Turki for the Mughal women and Hindi or other regional languages

for the Hindu women. Having a good command over Persian, which was the language of poetry and literature, was considered as a great accomplishment. The women competed among themselves in the various fields of learning to vie for the Emperor's attention. Religious education and learning the Quran was considered of prime importance. Mehrunnisa, the daughter of Ghiyas Beg, a Persian noble at the Mughal court was taught to read the Quran as a young child. Later she grew up and married Jahangir, and came to be better known as Nur Jahan. Zeb-un-Nisa, the scholarly daughter of Aurangzeb, became a 'Hafiz' at the age of seven, when she learnt the Quran by heart. Her proud father Aurangzeb, celebrated this accomplishment by throwing a lavish feast for his whole army, which was held in the great maidan at Delhi. Aurangzeb's second daughter, Zinat-un-Nisa too, had an indepth knowledge of the Quran.

Babur's daughter Gulbadan Begum will always be remembered as the author of her brother Humayun's biography, titled eponymously as "Humayun Nama", During Akbar's tine, his nurse Maham Begam, and his wives Ruqaiya Begum and Salima Sultan Begum were all educated and cultured women. Nur Jahan was not famed for her beauty alone but she was also accomplished in various fields like riding, shooting, embroidery, one of her many preoccupations being the writing of verse. Mumtaz Mahal too wrote poetry. Jahanara and Roshanara, the daughters of Shah Jahan were also well- educated and Jaharaca produced literary works of great value. She wrote beautiful poetry and wrote a biography of the great

Sufi saint, Khwaja Moin-ud-din Chisti of Ajmer called 'Munis-ul-Arwah'. Even the strict and stone -hearted Aurangzeb allowed his daughters to have a good education and zeb-un-Nisa became a renowned poetess of her day. The Mughal women spent much of their personal allowance to give monetary support for the spread of education, establishing educational institutions, lending patronage to men of learning, maintaining libraries and collecting books. It is indeed remarkable that these educated Mughal women, though few in number, could leave a mark in the literary world, keeping pace with their male counterparts. This truly was a great achievement.

The life of the women were not always confined within the four walls of their home A lot of the time in their life were spent in traveling to other parts of the country, for various reasons. They traveled along with their men folk. Sometimes these women even accompanied their men in military expeditions, during exile, or may be on hunting safaris or to look after their vast acres of widely scattered family estates ; or to go to cooler climates to escape the summer heat; or maybe going sight seeing and even pilgrimages to local shrines.

Wherever the Emperor, the women accompanied him. Often the women faced a lot of difficulties during their long journeys because of lack of adequate provisions or inclement weather or dangerous routes. Without a doubt, they suffered greatly but we have never heard of Mughal women refusing to accompany their men, even under adverse circumstances. Babar's grand mother Aisan Daulat Begum,

even though aged and elderly accompanied him on his long travels along with his mother Qulug Nigar Khanum even under extremely difficult and dangerous circumstances. Hamida Banu Begumm Nur Jahan, Mumtax Mahal and Dara's wife Nadira Begum stood by the side of their husbands at all times and suffered the most tedious and dangerous treks for their husbands' sakes. Such was the royalty and courage of these remarkable women of the Mughal age.

It is found in the study of this thesis, the Mughal era was one of the most prosperous and glorious period in Indian history, and it bears testimony to the economic prosperity and affluence during the Mughal days. The empire of the Mughals saw many developments in all the spheres of economy which included agriculture, commerce and industries, banking and currency and imports and export trades. Much has been written and discussed by eminent scholars, writers, travelers and historians on the various aspects of the Mughal period. The economic prosperity with contributions of the royal Mughal women occupies a unique place in the annals of Indian history.

It is noted that the status of the public women was very much dignified. They enjoyed a respectable position and were held in high esteem by the people for their many skilful accomplishments in the field of education and fine arts. And in dancing singing and playing musical instruments they were really unsurpassed.

Their many- sided contributions can in no way be deemed a mean achievement. In their own unique way, the Mughal women have carved a niche for themselves in the vast course of events collectively

known as the Mughal Era. I claim that my thesis will prove instructive and provide the much needed impetus to students of history for further study and research on varied aspects of The Role of Women during Mughal rule.

Last but not the least, a select study of the "Role of women during Mughal rule 1526 to 1707" will pay rich dividends to the students of history and besides such micro historical study will enable us to understand and appreciate at the macro level the glory of the role of women during Mughal rule from 1526 to 1707.



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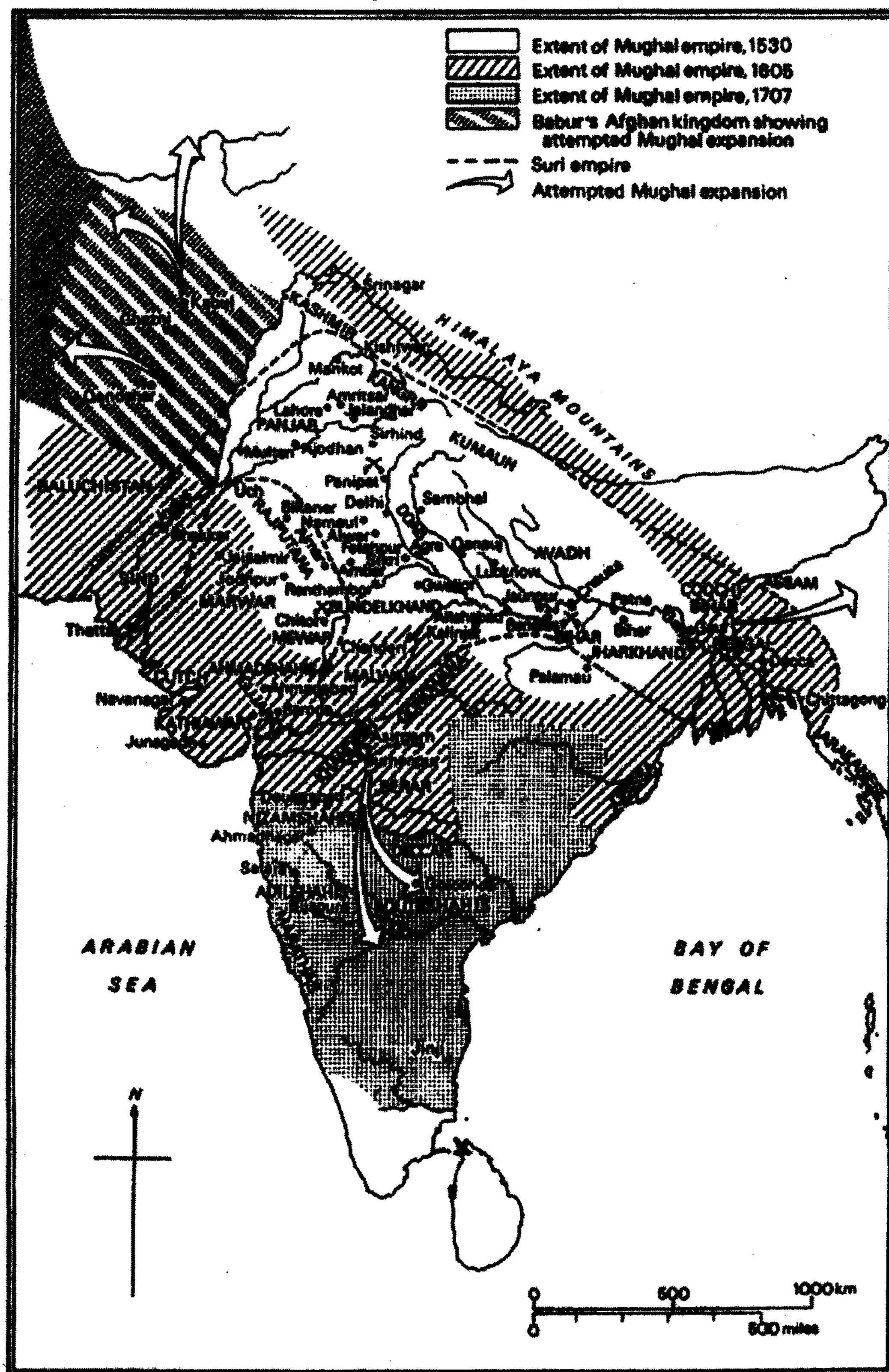
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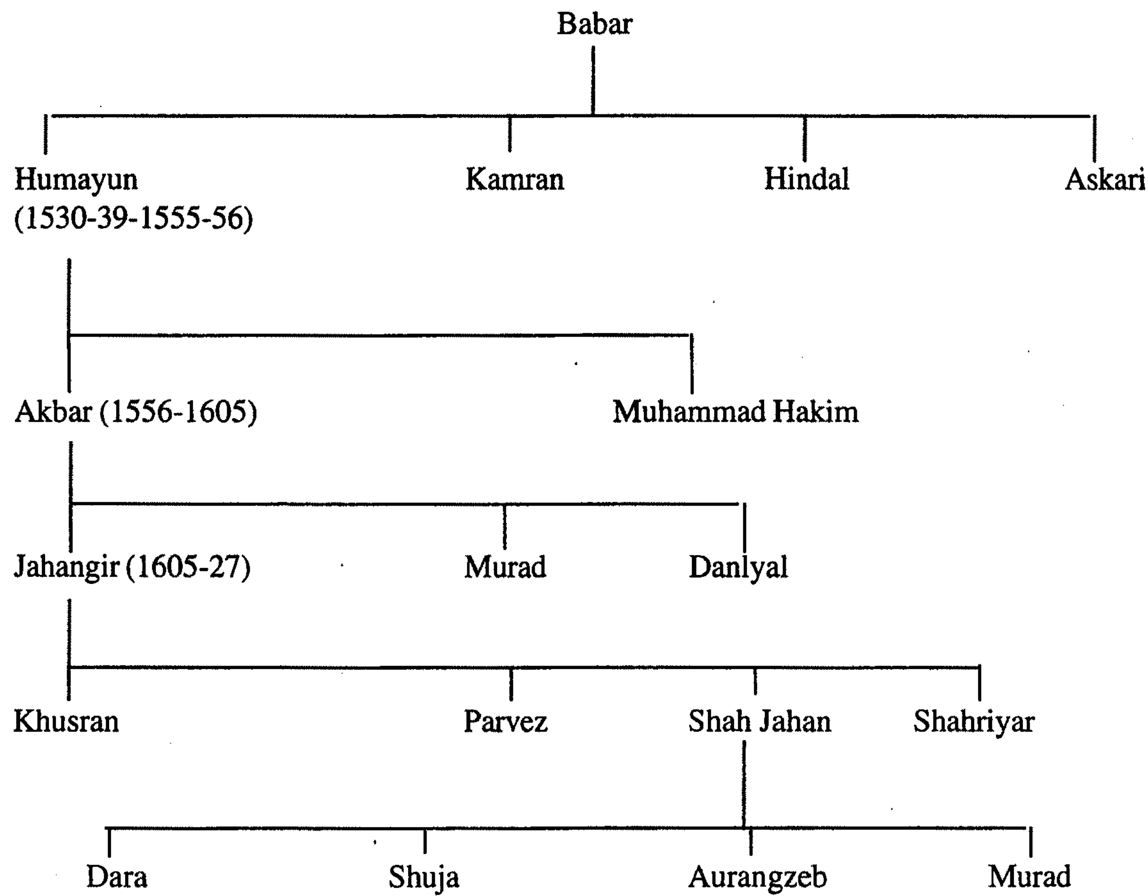
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ILLUSTRATIONS



Frontispiece The Mughal empire, 1526 to 1707

GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE GREAT MUGHALS



APPENDIX - 'A'

Farmans of Nurjahan

(FARMAN NO. I)*

God is Great

Jahangir

(Nurjahan)

Seal of Nurjahan—(in the form of couplet).

"By the light of the sun (or love) of Jahangir—and the divine grace the signet of Nurjahan has illuminated the world alike moon."

The chosen of the peers, worthy of favours and obligation Raja Surat Singh, hoping for the sublime favours, should know that a sum of money, according to the bonds, is due to Kishan Dass and Baroman his son, the treasurer of Her Majesty, and keeps it (the sum) with his uncle Sultan Rathore.

If so, as the aforesaid Rathore is in his (Surat Singh's) service he (Surat Singh) is ordered to pay off the said debts (which the said Rathore owes, according to the legal bonds, to the said Kishan Dass and Baroman), from his own estate, to their (Kishan Dass and Baroman's) peoples (relatives and to deduct the same from his (Rathore's) salary (lit. substance money).

He should not disobey the orders and should regard it as his duty.

D/ 10th Azar Elahi . . . 12
December, 1617

* *A Descriptive List of Farmans, Manshurs and Nishans Addressed by Imperial Mughals to the Princes of Rajasthan*, p. 38.

(FARMAN NO. II)*

God is Great

Seal of Nurjahan.

Ganga Bai, being hopeful for the exalted favours, should know, that it has just now reached our eminent notice, that the village of Oodey Singh, son of Raja Dalpat Singh, being attacked, Haya and Mohan have been done to death, and their relatives been confined. An attestation (signed by a body of people), sealed by Hashim, the wearied messenger and Mohammed Naqi, has been delivered to (our) Court. Such matters are very bad and undesirable.

Therefore, she should, on being informed of the contents of this Majestic order, take them out of the confinement, send (them) to the Court, and should not hereafter attempt to go near that village.

She should not evade this order and should regard it her duty.

D/ 2nd Shaharyur . . . 14.
August, 1619.

* *A Descriptive List of Farmans, Manshurs and Nishans Addressed by Imperial Mughals to the Princes of Rajasthan*, p. 39.

(FARMAN NO. III)*

Jahangir

Nurjahan

Seal of Nurjahan—God is Great: With the light of the sun (or love) of Jahangir, the ruler of the world, the signet of Nurjahan Badshah became illuminated.

The Commissioner of Raja Suraj Singh, the pick of his equals, should know, that whereas, an exalted mandate has been issued in his name, from the sublime Court, he should therefore, act in accordance with its contents, be too cautious and careful to evade it. He should be hoping for the royal favours and exalted condescensions in proportion to his service, devotion and sincerity.

He should not oppose or evade this order.

D/ 11th Aban . . . 31.
October, 1626.

* *A Descriptive List of Farmans, Manshurs and Nishans Addressed by Imperial Mughals to the Princes of Rajasthan*, p. 65.

APPENDIX—'B'

The following Nishans of Nurjahan are preserved in Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner.*

Year	*Class of Correspondence*	*Name of the Writer*	*Name of addressee*	*Subject*
August 1622	Nishan	Empress Nurjahan	Raja Jai Singh	Desiring him to send the money of the lease of Amer per Mohd. Hashim.
November 1664	,,	,,	,,	Expressing pleasure on his (Raja's) disassociation with Mahabat Khan, desires him now to act according to the wishes of Khan-i-Jahan.
November 1625	,,	,,	,,	Desiring him to act according to the orders conveyed to him through Fidai Khan.
December 1625	,,	,,	,,	Sending a Khilat per Khwaja Roz Bihan.
October 1626	,,	,,	,,	Desiring the Raja to report every thing to the Royal Court and not to act against the Royal Orders.

* *A Descriptive List of Farmans, Manshurs, and Nishans Addressed by the Imperial Mughals to the Princes of Rajasthan*, p. 28.

APPENDIX—'C'

Following Nishans of Jahanara Begam are preserved in Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner.*

Year	*Class of correspondence*	*Name of the writer*	*Name of addressee*	*Subject*
July 1640	Nishan	Princess Jahanara	Raja Jai Singh	Desiring the Maharaja to identify that Hem Singh is the real son of Raja Satra Sal and report it to Sultan Nisar Begam so that he may be rewarded with a khilat and mansab.
September 1651	,,	Begam Sahiba	,,	Appreciating his services in expelling the violators of peace from Kaman and Pahari and populating them with the Rajputs, informs that a farman has been issued to him directing him to attend the Royal Court with a view to proceed on an expedition to Kandhar.
Undated	,,	Begam Sahiba	,,	Assuring him (Raja) of many Royal favours.

* *A Descriptive List of Farmans, Manshurs and Nishans Addressed by Imperial Mughals to the Princes of Rajasthan*, pp. 30 & 32.

APPENDIX—'D'

*Farman of Hamideh Banu Begam**

He is Great.

Hamideh Banu, daughter of Ali Akbar.

Order of Hamideh Banu Begam.

May it be known to the Karori and diligent officer and others of the Paraganah of Mahaban in the Sarkar of the Great Seat (capital) of the Empire Agra, that according to the Farman of the exalted and the just (Emperor) the cows belonging to the indisputable prayer-offerer (well-wisher) Vithalesharai, wearer of the sacred thread (Brahmin) may graze, wherever they are and not a single individual out of the Khalsa or Jagir (land-holders) should molest them or prevent them (from grazing). They must permit his cows to graze (wherever they are). The above-mentioned (Vithalrai) should, therefore, remain easy at heart. It is incumbent (on all) that they must act according to the order and carry it out, and they should not act contrary to and against it (should not deviate from it). Written on the 10th day of Ramzan at Mubarak A. H. 989, Sunday (8th October A. D. 1581 (O.S.) Samvat year 1638.

* *Imperial Farmans*, Tr. by K.M. Jhaveri, No. III.

APPENDIX—'E'

*Farman of Maryam-uz-Zamani, the mother of Emperor Jahangir.**

(TRANSLATION)

"God is Great.

Seal—Wali Nimat Begam, mother of the King Nuruddin Jahangir.

Unwan—The order of Maryam Zamani . . . . the asylum of dignity and perfect wisdom . . . . chieftainship, worthy of kindness and beneficence . . . . should be expectant of favour and know that whereas Mudabbir Beg, one of the slaves and well-wishers of this court . . . . , has represented that the fiscal authorities have granted him a Jagir at the pargana of Chaupala in Sarkar Sambhal in lieu of his pay but its assets have not been realised by his agents and Suraj Mal Zamindar embezzles and usurps them. (It is hereby ordered) that on learning the contents of the farman of Her Exalted Highness, he should summon the ryot before him and making enquiry into the matter get all the dues, the present revenue, and arrears, paid to the aforesaid Mudabbir Beg and he should not permit Suraj Mal to embezzle or usurp a single Fallus or Jital.[1] Considering this imperative, he should bring the order to execution and do nothing contrary to it . . . . on the date . . . . the month of tir of Ilahi year . . . . "

* Indian Historical Records Commission Proceedings of Meetings, Vol. VIII, 1925, p. 169.

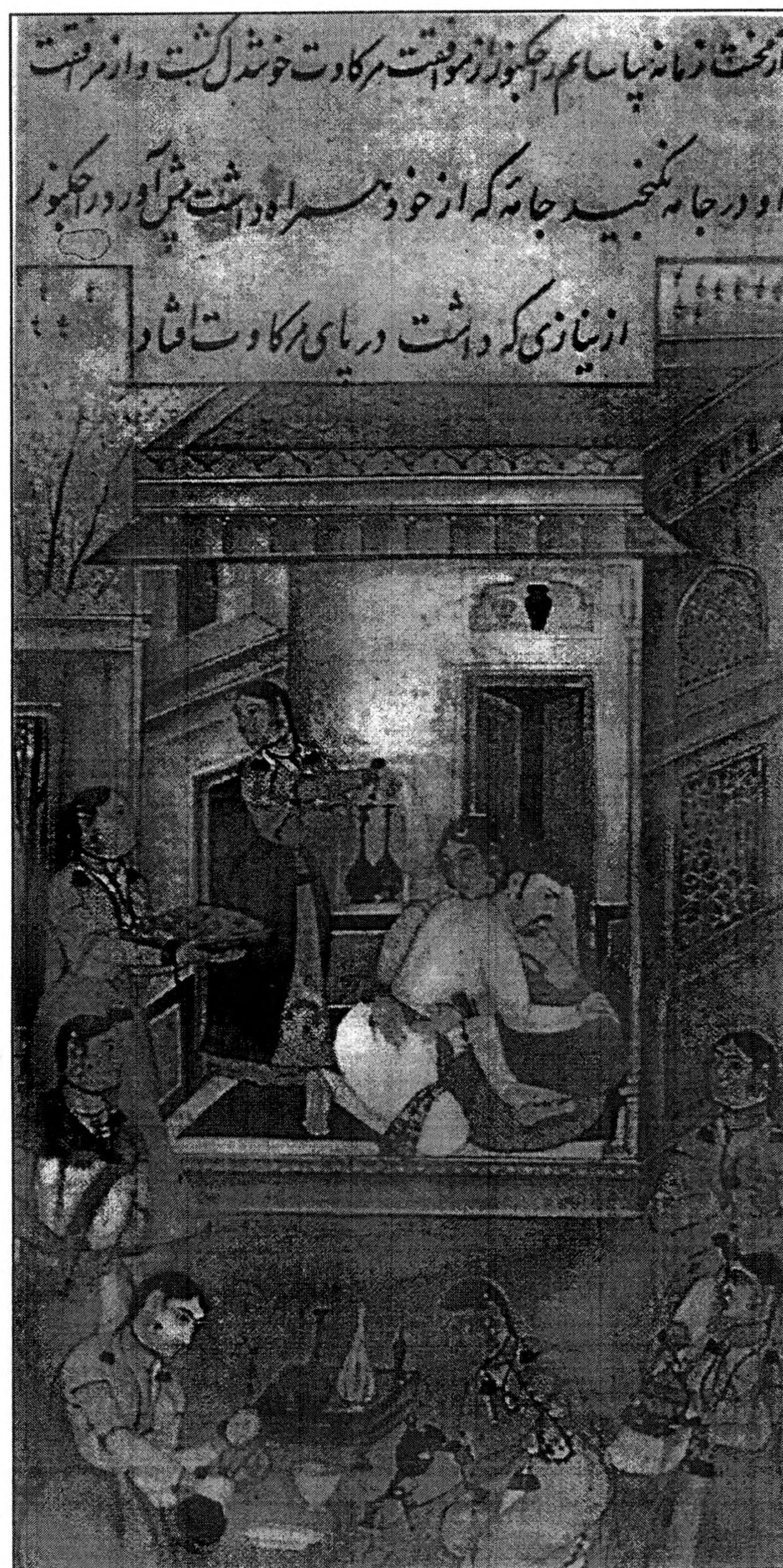
[1] Fallus and Jital were copper coins.



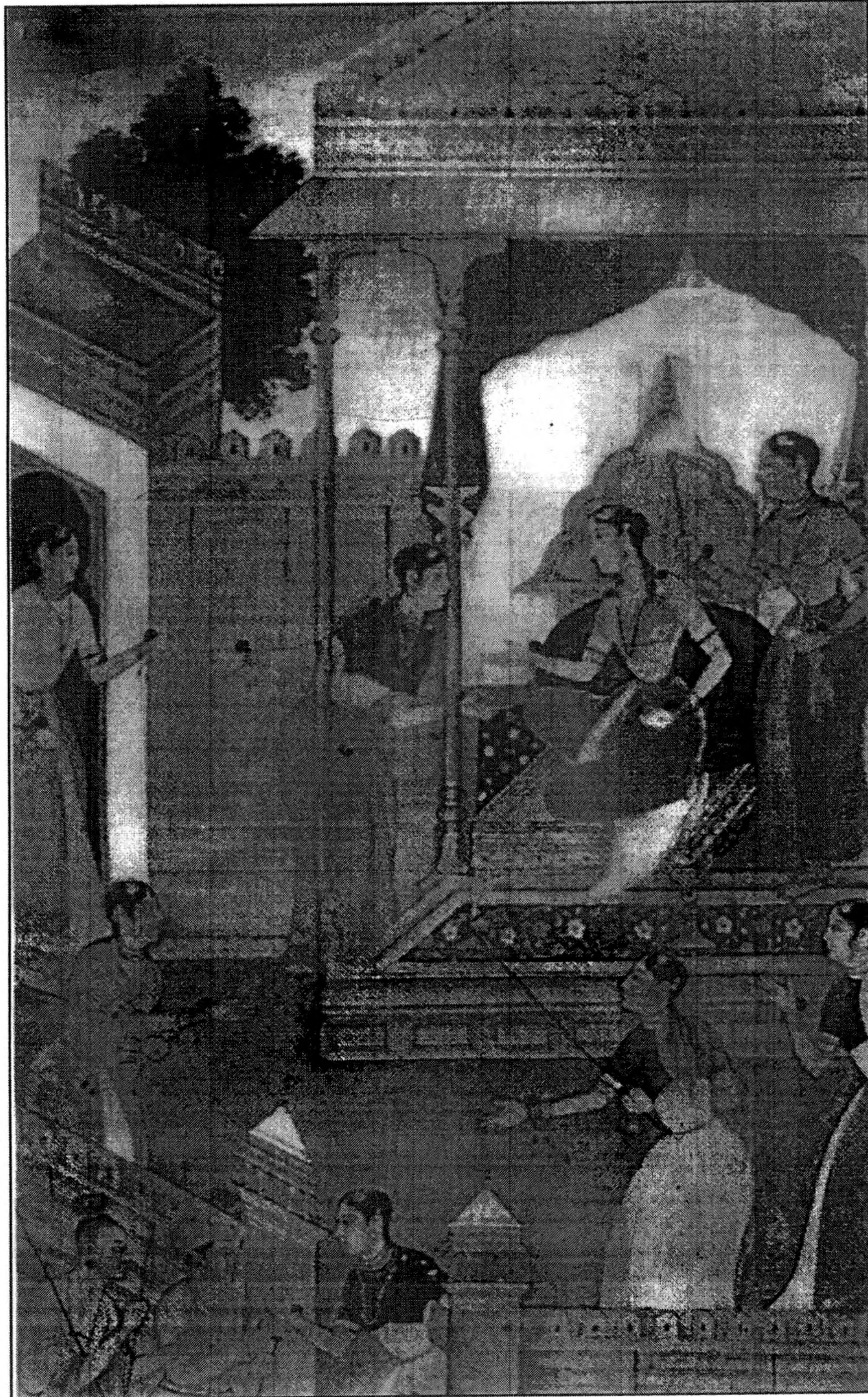
Dara Shukoh and Rana-i-dil



Prince in bed chamber



A moment of tender of love



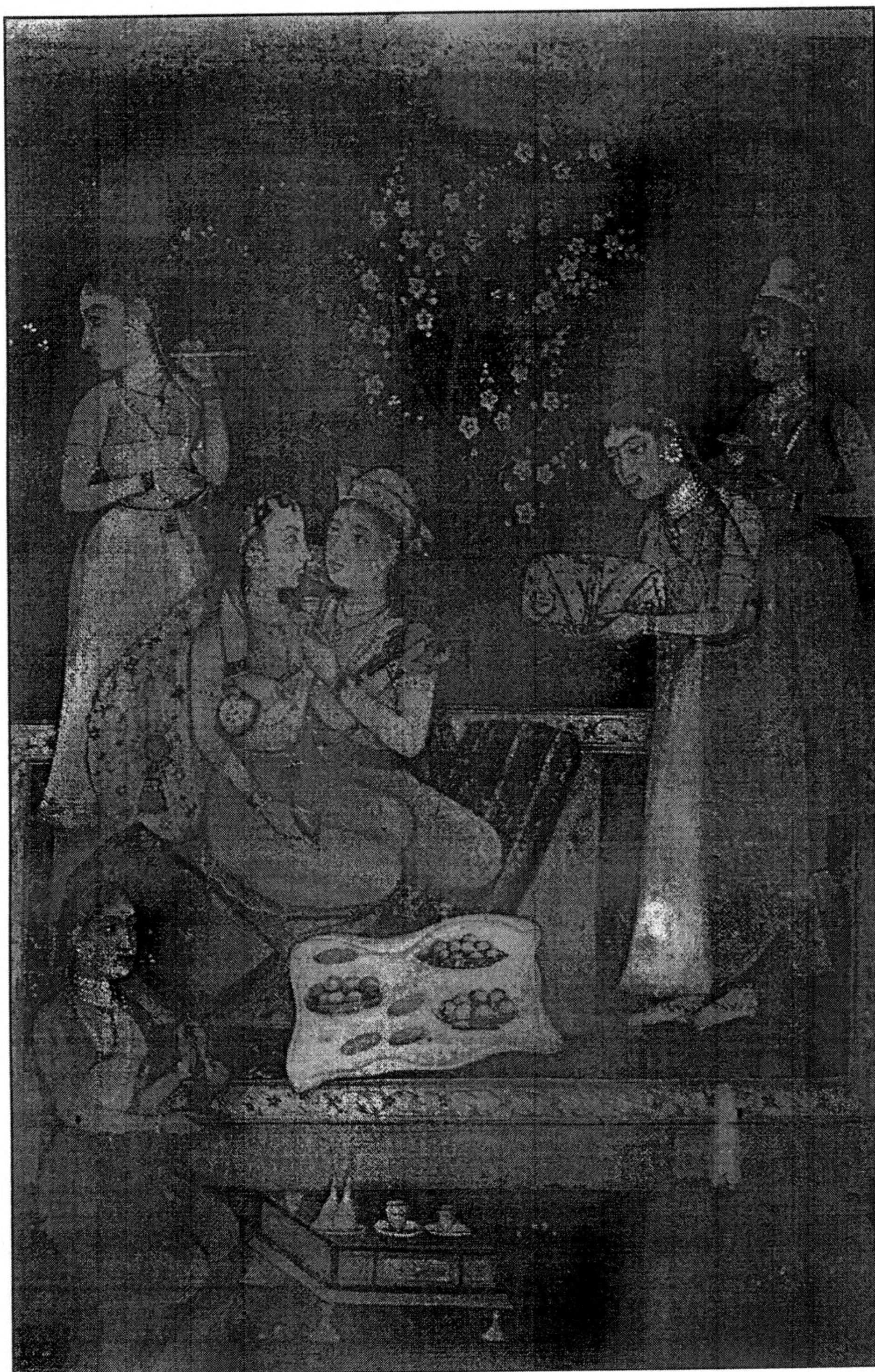
Princess sending message



Princes rewarding suppliant



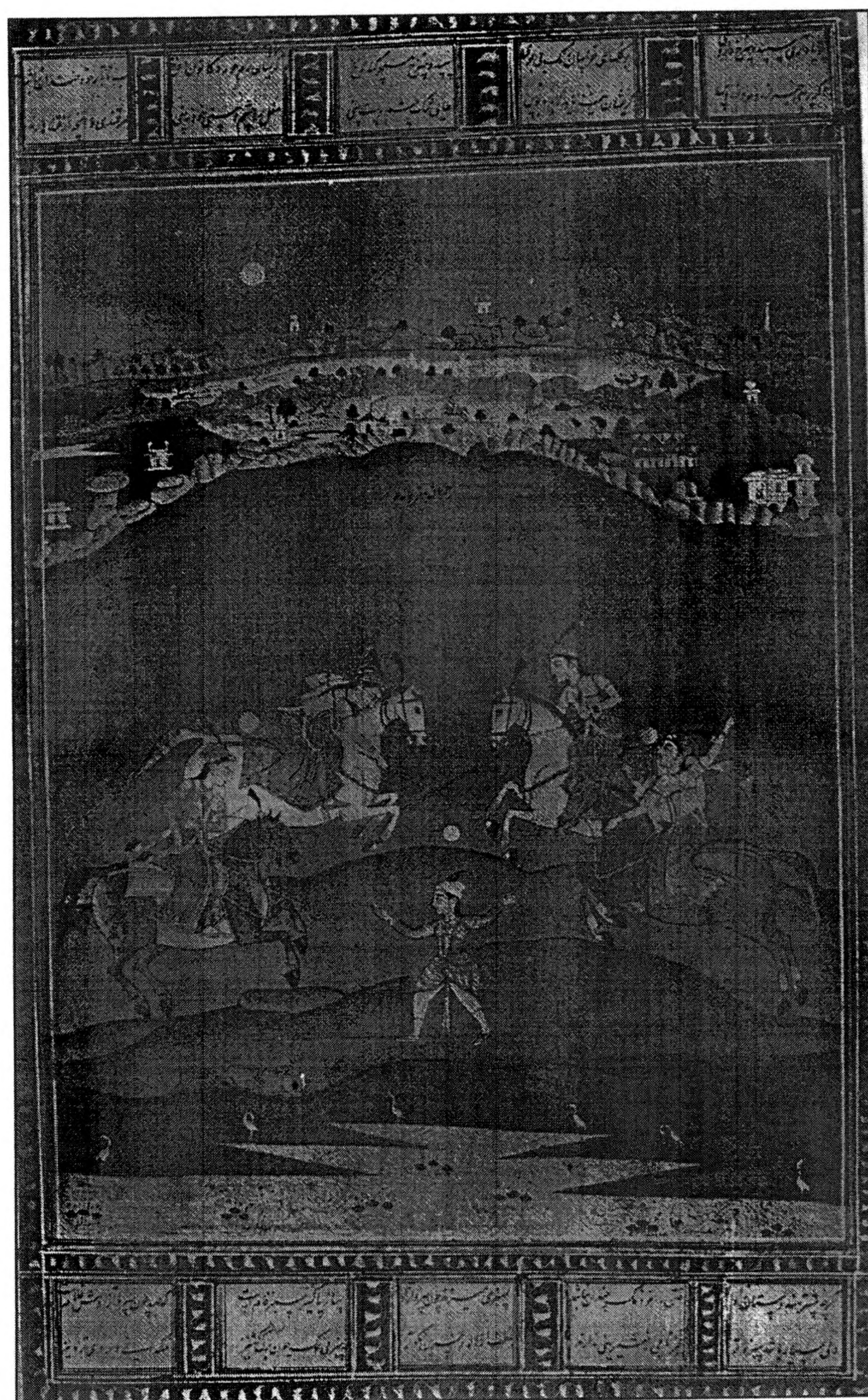
Birth of Prince Murad



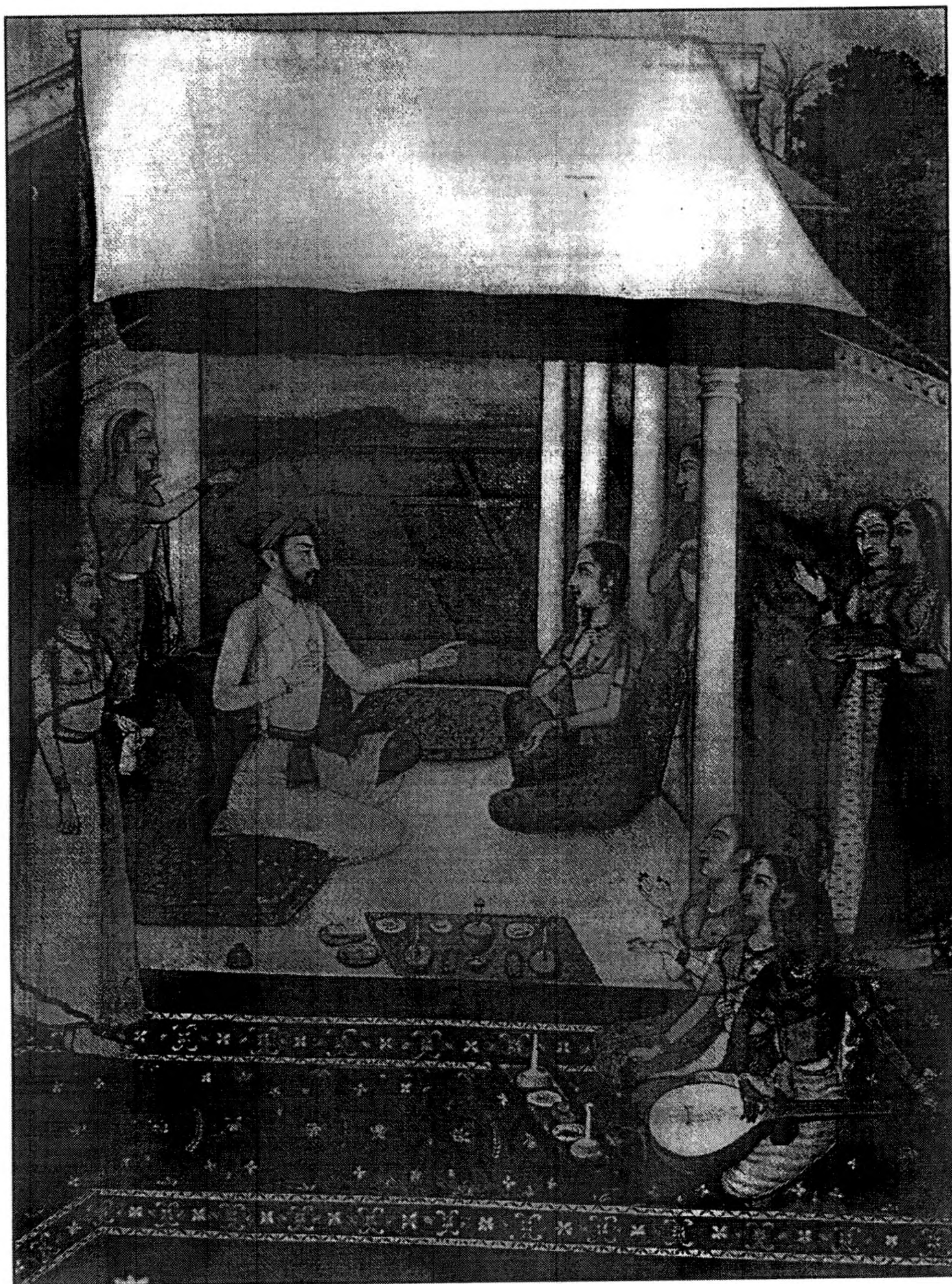
Breakfast in the Zanana



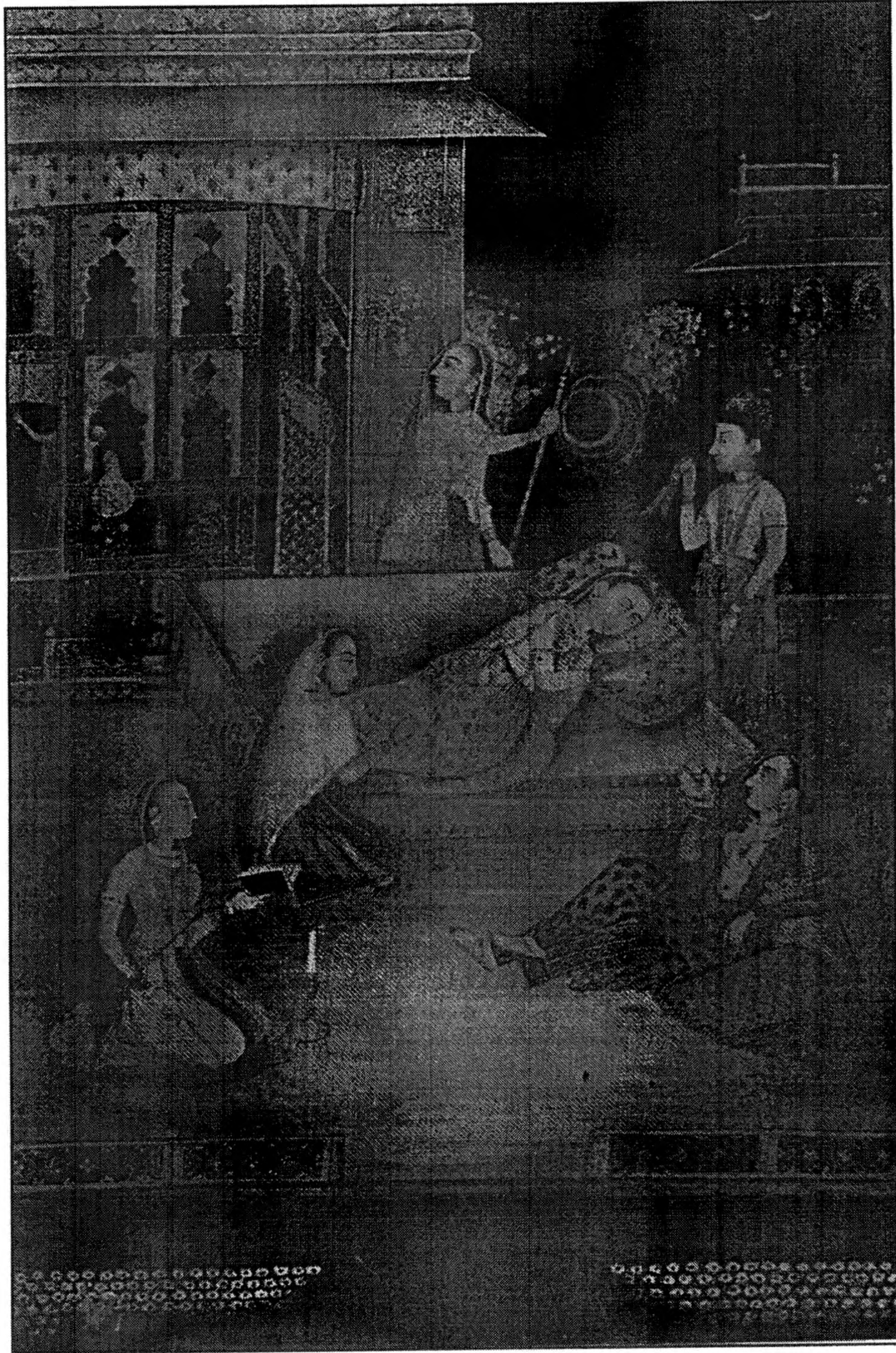
A couple in dalliance



Chand Bibi playing chaugan or polo



Prince in harem



Princes sleeping beneath a night sky, eunuch in attendance



Princes Sultan-un-nisa Begum, daughter of Emperor Jahangir



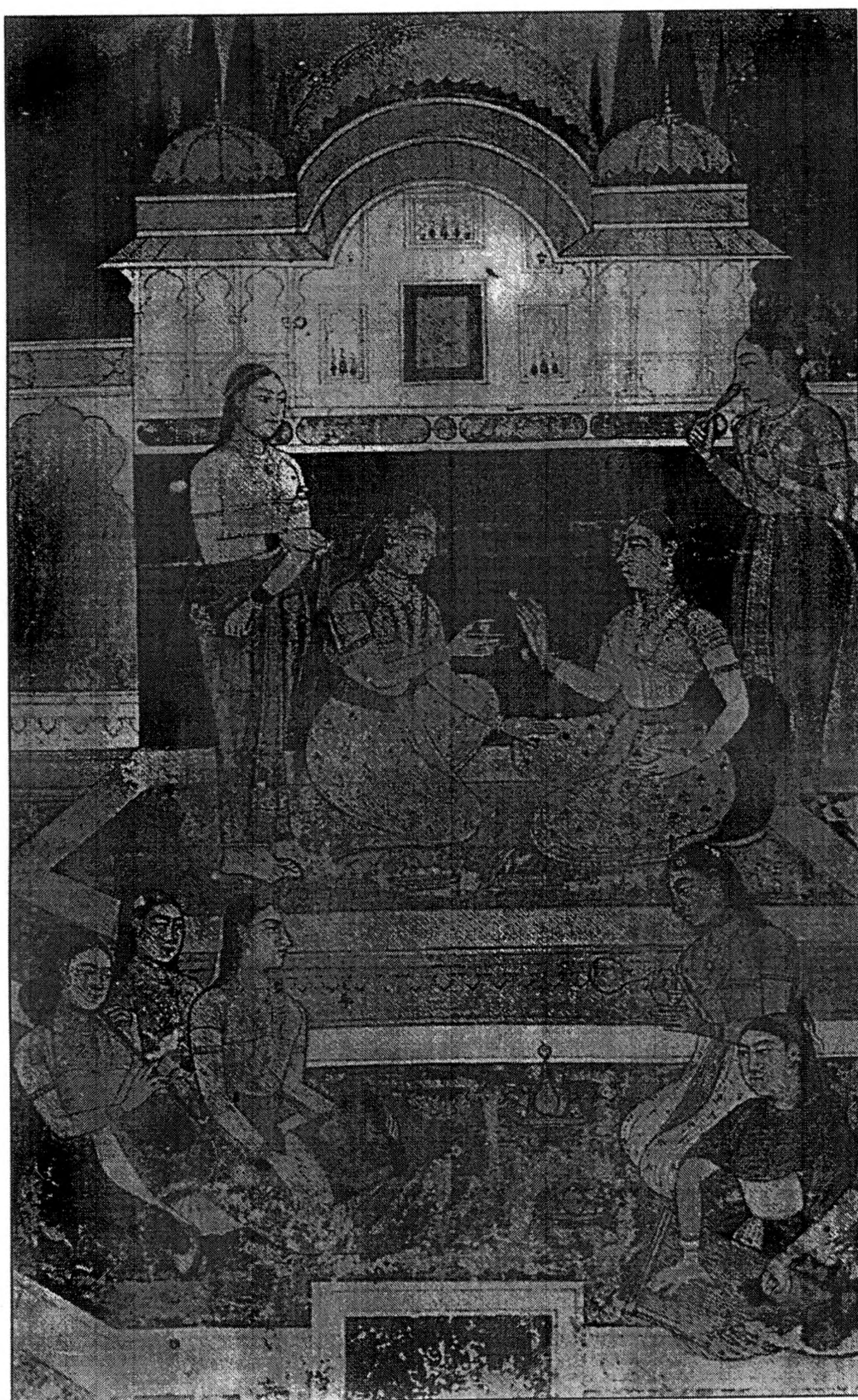
Jahangir with his ladies in a garden pavilion



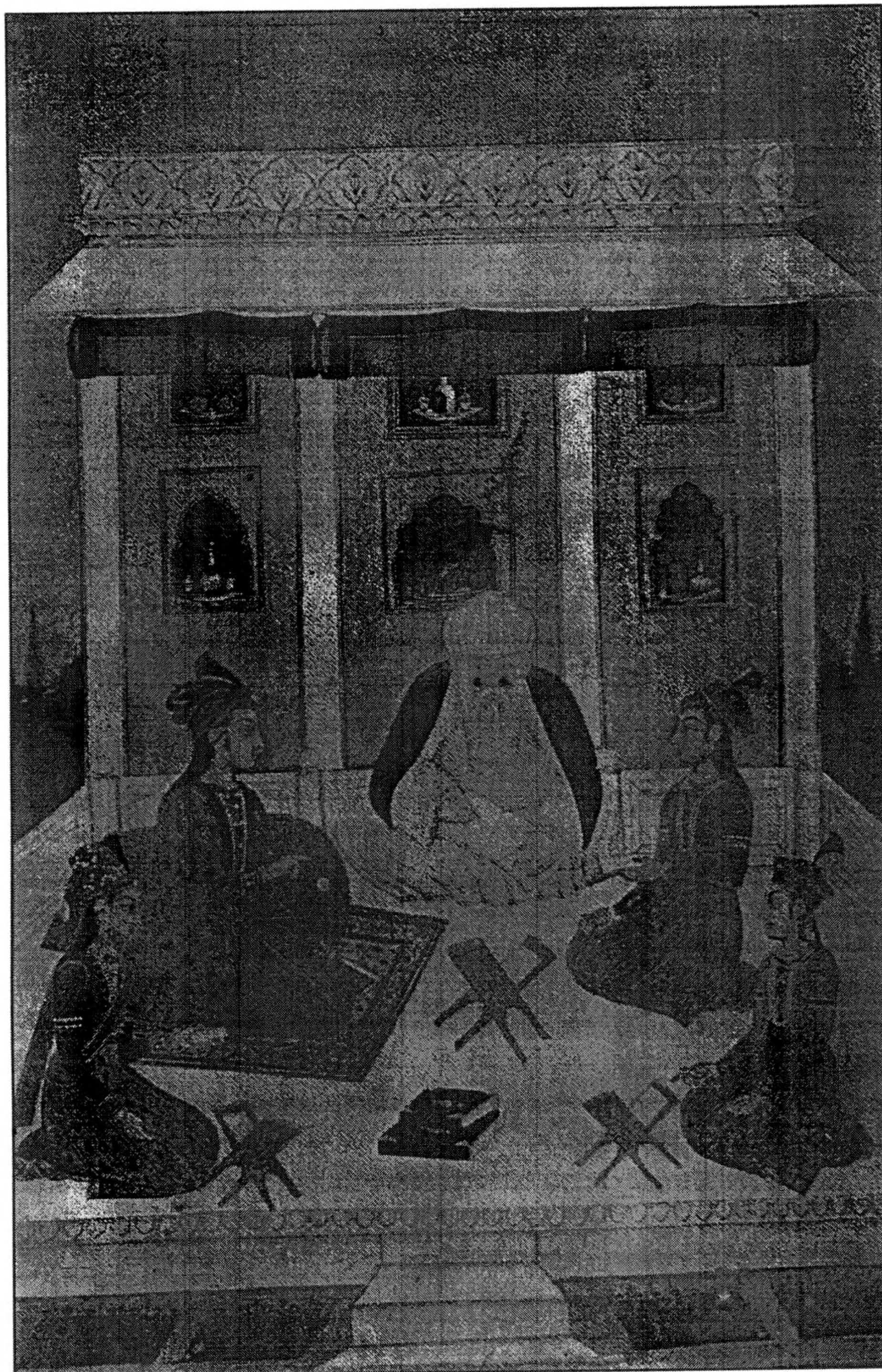
Marriage procession of Prince Dara Shukoh



Musicians in Dara Shukoh's marriage procession



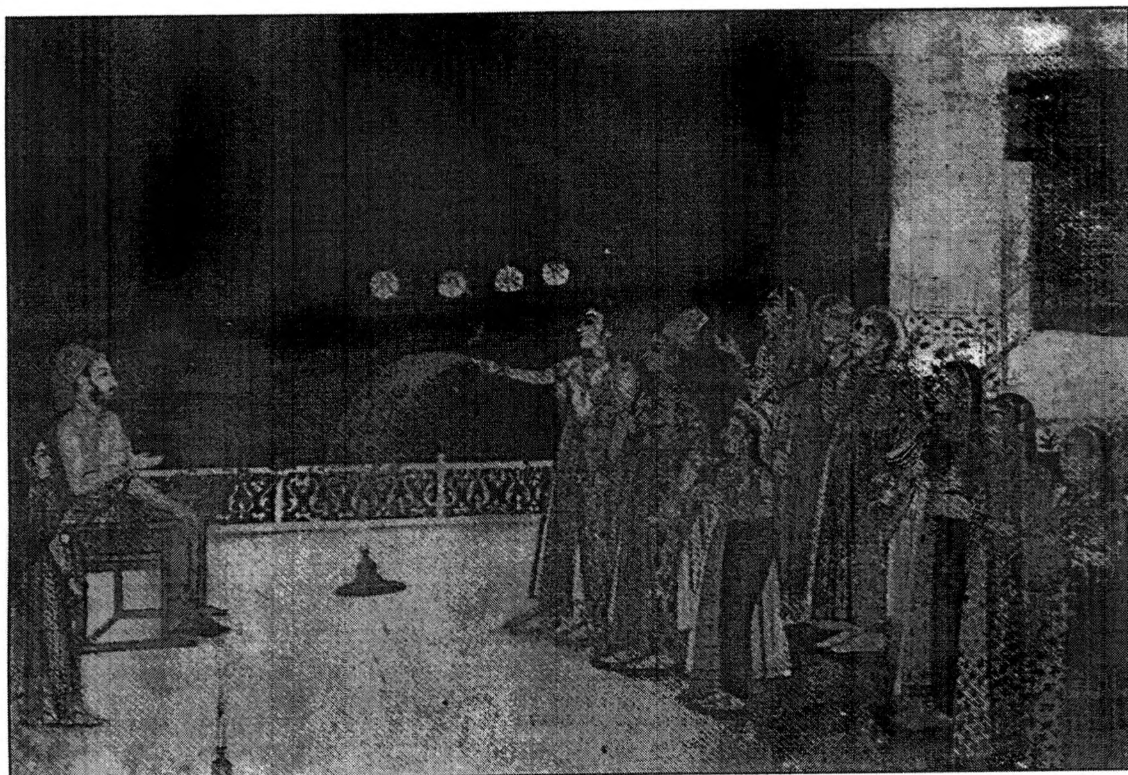
Princess drinking wine



Princess with their teacher



Prince receiving beloved



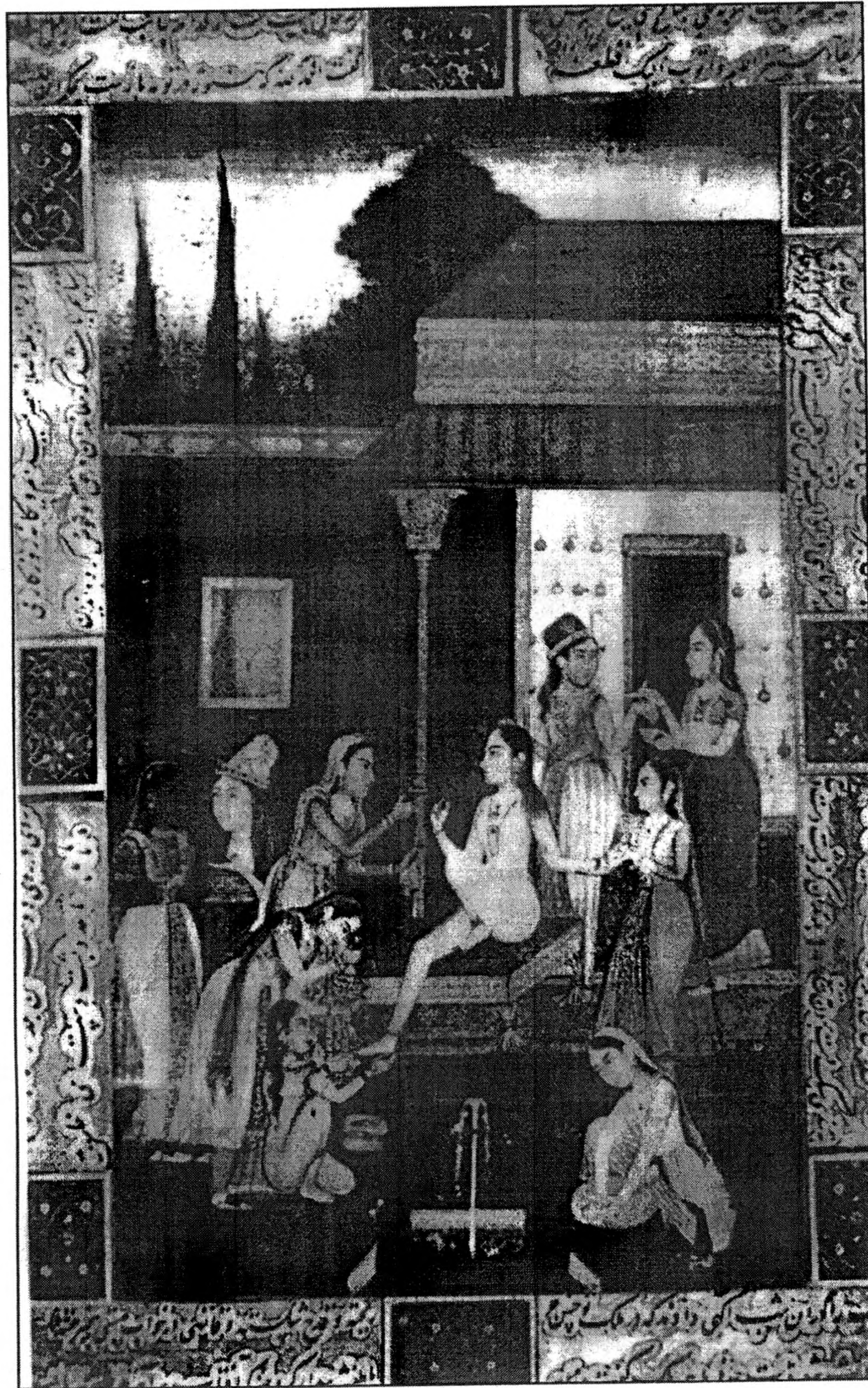
Display of fireworks



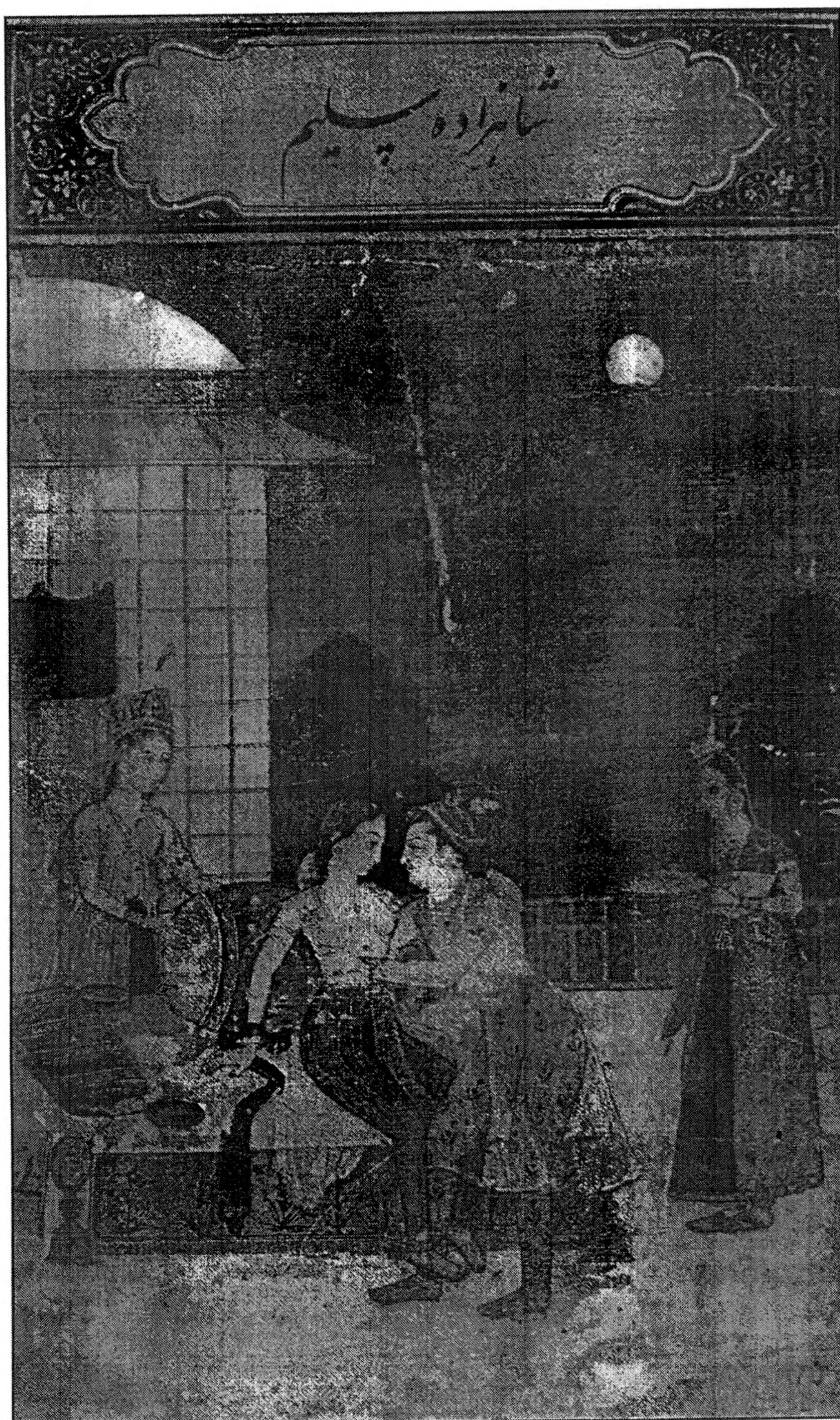
Prince playing holi in his harem



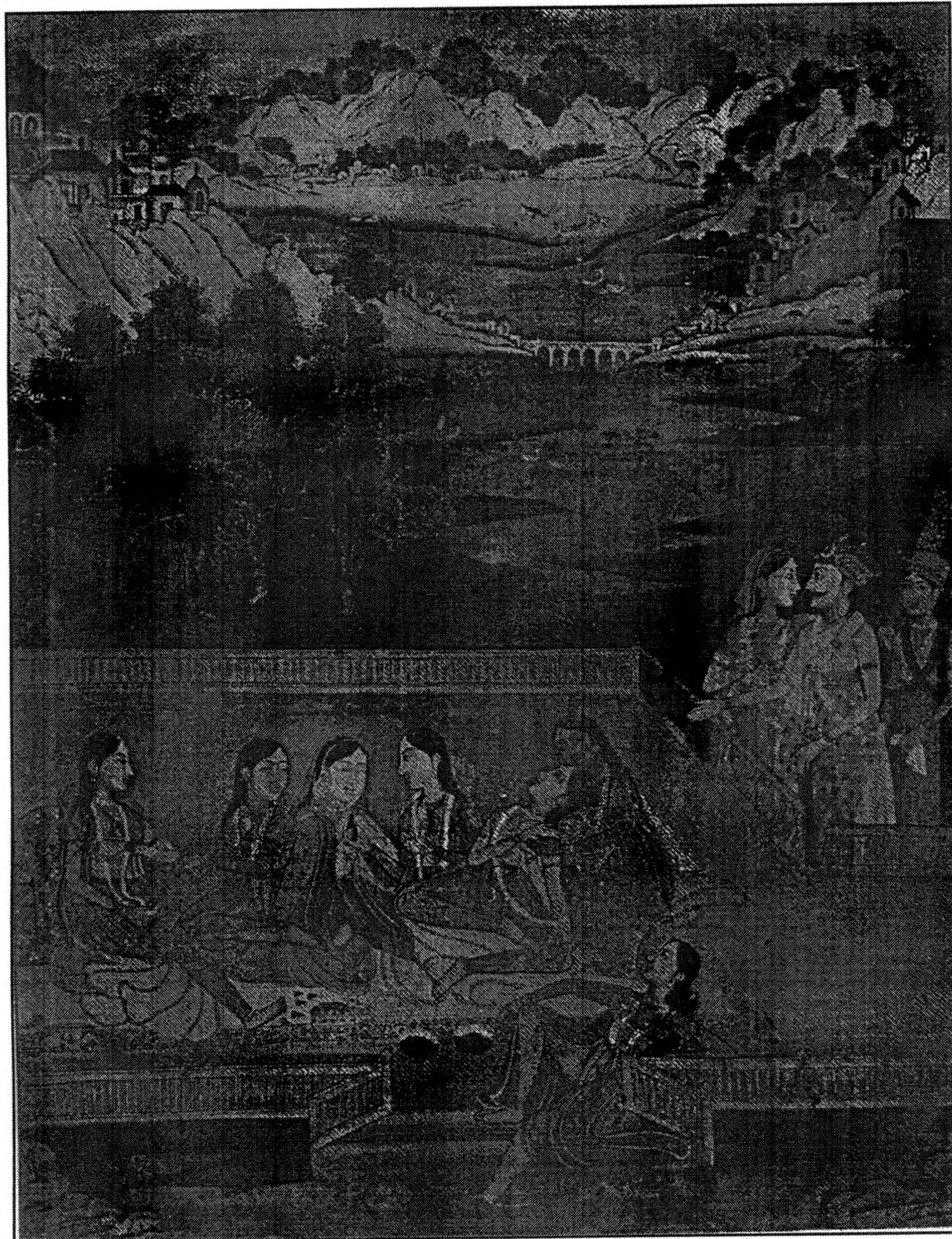
Reception of Jahangir and Sahajahan by Nur Jahan at Mandu



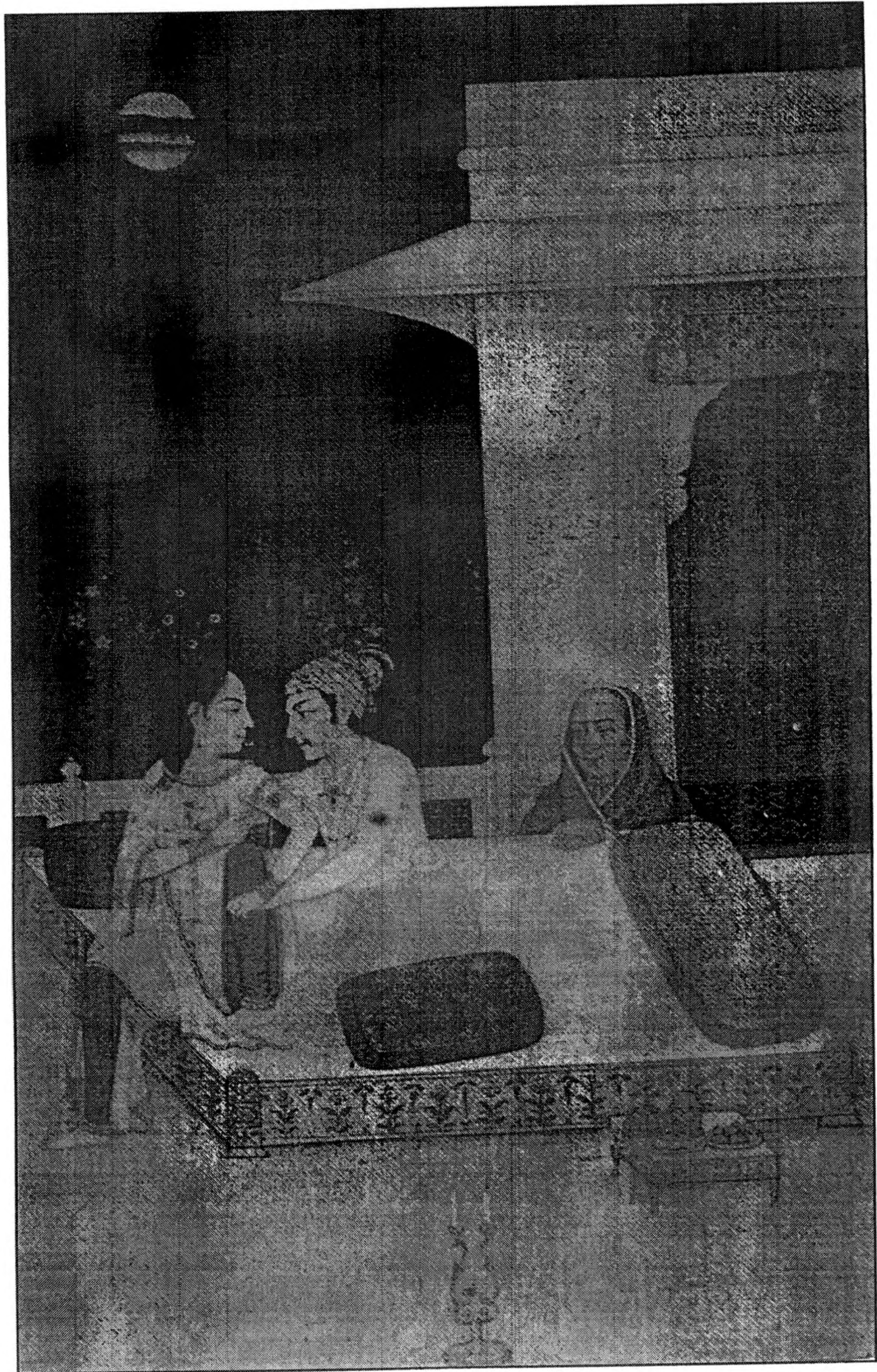
Princes having her toilet in the Zenana



Prince Salim in bedchamber



Lovelorn princes awaiting arrival of lover



Tryst with a beauty with chaperon in attendance